My Day with the Hounds, &c.

BY

Geo. Finch Mason.

W. P. Spalding, Cambridge. — W. Kent & Co. London.

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JOHN A. SEAVERNS

MY DAY WITH THE HOUNDS,

AND OTHER STORIES.

MY PORTRAIT IN THE ACADEMY

MY

DAY WITH THE HOUNDS,

And other Stories.

BY

G. FINCH MASON,

Author of "Sporting Sketches."

Cambridge:
W. P. SPALDING, 43, SIDNEY STREET.
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TO

MORGAN S. WILLIAMS,

(Of Aberpergwm)

THIS SMALL COLLECTION OF

SPORTING STORIES

IS DEDICATED

BY

HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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MY DAY WITH THE HOUNDS.

"Well," says my friend Tom Lumley (Tom is staying with me from Saturday until Monday), puffing a cloud of smoke from his lips and straddling his legs out in front of my smoking-room fire, until they look for all the world like a pair of compasses—"well, I suppose you'll be having a turn soon, like a good many more of us, with the fox or the stag, shan't you?"

"Not if I know it, my dear fellow," I reply; "not if I know it. No fox, stag, hare, or any other nasty animal for me any more, thank you. I've had a turn with the

foxhounds once in my life, and I'll take precious good care it shall be the last."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roars Tom. "By Jove! you must have had a choker off. Tell us all about it; I'm sure it must be worth hearing. What did they do to you? Somebody must have ridden over you, and broken a rib or two, or—stay, I have it; you've had a day with the Squire down in Tuckemupshire, ridden over a hound, and been well bad-worded and asked for your subscription on the spot. I know the old Squire—nice clean-tongued old gentleman when anything goes wrong. But do explain; how was it?"

"No, no," I reply; "it's too long a story. I won't tell it you now, but I'll tell you what I will do. I have my sporting adventures all scribbled down in black and white, and you shall have the manuscript to read to-morrow, when you go away; then you can laugh at me as much as you like by yourself."

"Agreed," says Tom, "and if it's amusing

I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give it to a fellow I know, of a literary turn of mind. He'll put it ship-shape, perhaps illustrate it—for he's a bit of an artist as well—take it to a publisher's, and make some coin of the realm of it. Yes, now I think of it, Bryant de Butcherbootes is the very man. Poor devil! he's deuced hard up too, just now. What do you say?"

"Oh, I don't mind in the least," I reply. "Your friend, Mister—Mister Blucherbootes" ("Butcherbootes," corrects Tom)—"Butcherbootes, yes—I beg his pardon—of course won't put my real name in?"

"Oh dear, no," says Tom; "trust him for that. That's arranged, then. Don't forget, old fellow, to give me the MS. to-morrow morning. I'll ask Butcherbootes to dinner at the "Fryingpan" to-morrow night, and hand it over to him."

That settled to Tom's satisfaction, he and I smoke another cigar apiece, drink another

brandy-and-soda, and take ourselves off to bed. The next morning we journey up to town by the Midland Railway bound to our respective offices in the city; and as we part company at Moorgate Street, I blushingly entrust my MS. into Tom's hands, wondering, as I wend my way to my office, how I shall look in print when introduced to the world by his accomplished young friend, Mr. de Butcherbootes.

ENTR'ACTE.

Written by Bryant de Butcherbootes.

"Conduit Street, 2.30 A.M.

"Oh dear, I'm horribly sleepy. Good dinner Tom Lumley gave us to-night at the "Frying-pan." By the way, there's that precious manuscript of that friend of his; hope I haven't lost it—no, here it is. Heavens! what a business-like fist the fellow writes; the careful way all the *t*'s are crossed and the *i*'s dotted; look like £ *s. d.*, somehow or another.

Wonder whether he'd lend me fifty pounds if I were to ask him? Bet a *pony* he wouldn't. Cautious chaps these city gents. Tom says he's an out-and-out muff, but not half a bad fellow; drinks and cigars good, cook bad, and has a very pretty wife—all those sort of fellows have, wish I had. Happy thought—read a bit of it in bed."

N.B.—B. de B. brandy-and-sodas himself, goes to bed, reads for the space of five minutes; is heard to ejaculate feebly, "What a muff the beggar must be! wish I had some of his tin;" yawns, stares at the candle, shakes his head solemnly, and drops off to sleep—of course leaving the candle to put itself out, a feat it accomplishes in about an hour's time, in its last flicker very nearly setting light to the manuscript, the bed-clothes, and the valuable carcase of Mr. Bryant de Butcherbootes.

As that worthy's landlady remarks to an intimate, the next afternoon, over a cosy cup

of tea and lots of buttered toast—"Well, of all the careless creetures with fire and money as ever I seen, Mister Butcherbootes he beats 'em all 'oller; but he's a nice-spoken, amiable young gent, and I raly can't bear to be 'arsh with 'im."

Simkin, Lumper & Co.,
St. Mary Axe, E.C.

Samuel Simkin—"dat's me," as the facetious Mr. Moore, of the Christy Minstrels, would say; Thomas Whittington Lumper (private address, Avenue Road, St. John's Wood); Co., nobody—in short, a myth: that is the extent of our firm, which, thanks to the energy and perseverance of our respective parents, now no more, boasts of as good and solid a name as any in the city of London.

Brought up to business as it were from my cradle, and being entered to office-work directly I left school, at sixteen, and seeing no one scarcely, except my worthy parents, from one year's end to another, it is not

to be wondered at that I should grow up rather what is called a muff. My partner just the same: he was brought up much on the same recipe as I was. Talk to him of sporting in any of its branches, and he is nearly sick. He went once to Ascot, he will tell you, and, shocking to relate, the mob in hot pursuit of a "welsher" got hold of him in mistake, and, before they found out their error, beat and kicked him until he was nearly dead. That was not all; they carried off as souvenirs all his money and jewellery, including his gold watch and chain, the valued gift of his maternal grandmother. He went out shooting once, and got shot himself; he did not try that game again. He once went out hunting; got well sworn at by the master, was stoned by a cantankerous farmer for riding over his wheat, and lastly was kicked off. "No more racin', 'untin', or shootin' (he clips his *h*'s a bit), says Lumper, with much emphasis, when

he has finished telling his misfortunes to any of his friends.

To return, however, to my own experiences. As I said before, I am not like most young men of my time, and am afraid I am a dreadful muff. I am in my element when seated on a three-legged stool, and that is all I can say of myself.

The first branch of sport I tried my hand at was shooting. It happened thus: I went down one Christmas to spend the festive season with my friend Charlie Bangup, of the Stock Exchange, at his snug little place—"crib," he calls it—in Hertfordshire. Charlie as is well known, wears the glosiest hat, wears it more on one side, drives better horses, rides harder, and bets larger than any member of his fraternity. Well, on Boxing Day, Charlie announced at breakfast that there were some rabbits to be killed in a bit of gorse he had, not far from the house.

"We've had 'em all ferreted out," said

he, "and the holes stopped, and I know there are lots of 'em. Jack and Tom" (alluding to two men staying in the house) "have their guns with them, and you shall have one of mine."

"But, my dear fellow, I can't shoot!" I exclaim.

"Gammon!" answers Charlie. "Anybody can shoot."

So at last, persuaded sorely against my will, I consented to join the party; and off we started, in company with several beaters and sundry nondescript terriers. Charlie's groom was told off to stick to me with the cartridges, and to load for me, etc.

Arrived at the field of action, I was duly posted at the end of a small ride cut in the gorse. Charlie was right; there were lots of rabbits "cutting" about, stopped out of their comfortable homes, this fine frosty morning. I had not been posted two minutes before several crossed the ride like a flash

of lightning—a great deal too quick for me. Bang! bang! bang! go several guns round me ; and what with the shouts of the beaters, and the "Yap, yap! yow, yow, yow!" of the excited dogs, to say nothing of the enthusiastic young groom at my elbow, I hardly knew what I was doing, and could not make up my mind to let off my gun. At last I got used to the noise, and taking a pull at my flask—filled with orange brandy—I waited for the next rabbit to make his appearance, determined when he did to shoot.

A sagacious-looking terrier, evidently an old hand at the game, now made his appearance.

"That's our old Pepper, sir," remarks my friend the groom ; "he's as artful as any old woman, he is. He cost master the best part of a 'undred and fifty pund last lambing time killing *ship*" (sheep).

The disreputable Pepper looked up at me

with his head on one side, as much as to say "Can you shoot, I wonder?" and then, with a wag of his tail, proceeded to trot along, sniffing as he went, by the side of the gorse. Suddenly he stopped short, and with a look round at me, darted into the gorse. "Yap, yap, yap!" and out popped a rabbit, about twenty yards ahead of me. Not at all an excited coney, this; for he very deliberately sat up on his hind-legs, and looked about him when he emerged from the gorse. Apparently satisfied with my appearance, he very slowly shuffled on.

"Now's your time, sir," said my friend of the stable, behind me. "Let 'im have it, sir."

I raised my gun carefully to my shoulder, saw the impudent rabbit, as I thought, well at the sight at the end of the barrel, shut both eyes, and—pulled the fatal trigger.

"Oh! oh! oh! oh! Oh! dear! I'm killed! Boohoo! boohoo! boohoo!"

Heavens! what a row. Up come the other guns, pale in the face.

"What the deuce is the matter!" says Charlie. "Who's shot?"

Who indeed. What became of the rabbit I don't know. The charge of shot I meant for it had refused to have anything to do with that noble animal, and had instead divided its attentions between a sturdy furze bush and little Billy Wilkin's legs. Luckily that youth was more frightened than hurt, and a twenty pound note into the willing hands of his father, who was also assisting to rouse our game, proved an effectual cure. Disgusted with myself, I shot no more that day, nor indeed have I ever handled a gun since.

I am afraid Master Wilkins did not profit by my douceur as much as I could have wished, for it is on record that his beloved parent, a simple carpenter by trade, and a regular village sot as well, took a holiday to

himself, on the strength of my too liberal gift, for three weeks, during the whole of which time he was gloriously drunk. He honoured me, when I went back to town, by appearing at the station very obfuscated, and just as I had got into the train he staggered up, and insisted on shaking hands with me and giving me his drunken blessing, much to the delight of my fellow-passengers and my proportionate disgust.

I could tell you, but I won't, how I was maltreated and lamed, for goodness knows how long, by a nasty cricket ball, the only time in my life I ever assisted at what is called the noble game of cricket? Noble? Pah! It makes me ill the thought of it. I occasionally pay my money at Lord's cricket ground, and with a placid smile on my countenance and a large cigar in my mouth, look on whilst what I can call nothing but a lot of idiots are running about, until they perspire like the horses after the Derby. Men, too, old enough

to know better, barking their shins, blackening their eyes, and breaking their noses ; and they call it play. Well, I hope they like it ; I don't.

But I am wandering from my subject concerning my adventures in the hunting field. Hooick then to Simkin! hooick! It was just this time two years ago, about eleven o'clock on a dull October, or as I suppose Mr. Millais would call it, a "chill October morning," that an individual, presenting to the shrewd observer the appearance of a well-to-do, substantial man of business—the respectable-looking hat, the quiet tone of the continuations, and dark-coloured gloves, all denoting that the wearer was "something in the city" —might have been seen walking slowly along Piccadilly. That individual was myself. Why was I not at my post in the city, and what was I doing, at that time of day, in that part of the town? I will explain. For some time previously I had been feeling far from well.

Felt bilious when I woke up in the morning, lost my appetite, had a buzzing in my ears, couldn't sleep; in fact, felt thoroughly dyspeptic and out of sorts.

"Go and see your doctor," said my partner, Lumper.

"I will," said I, "to-morrow morning."

Accordingly, as I have just said, to-morrow morning found me wending my way along Piccadilly to Sackville Street, armed with the usual guinea in my waistcoat pocket, bound for the residence of my medical man, the great Dr. Cupper. In due time I arrived there, knocked at the door, and was shown into the doctor's library, where sundry other patients were waiting their turn, and whiled away the time by alternately reading the advertisement sheet of the *Times* and wondering what was the matter with all the other people in the room. At last came my turn.

"Will you step this way, sir?" from the

solemn servant, and I found myself in the great man's sanctum.

That worthy is standing warming himself in front of his fire as I enter. A tall, thin, sharp-looking man, with a particularly bright eye, which takes me in from the crown of my head to the soles of my boots in a second.

"Ha, ha!" is his greeting, "I see what's the matter with *you*; no need to trouble yourself to tell me. How d——d bilious you do look! Sit down. By Jove! you're as yellow as a guinea, stuffing yourself with turtle, blowing yourself out with champagne, and taking no exercise. Of course, I know all about it: all you city men do. Haven't you now? I'll tell you what to do, so attend to me. I suppose you want a pretty clear head for that business of yours, don't you? Good. Now, I ask you, how can you expect to have a head on your shoulders at all, if you will go on over eating, drinking, and smoking yourself every day of your life? Gad! you don't

deserve to feel well. You'll have the goodness to limit yourself to a pint of wine at your dinner, not more than two cigars a day, and be moderate in your eating; and I must insist on exercise and plenty of it, so the best thing you can possibly do is to buy a horse, and have a good gallop once a week with the hounds. Have this prescription made up. What's this? My guinea—thank you, I know I've earned it well. Come and see me again if you don't get better soon, and don't forget what I've told you about hunting. Finest thing in the world for a man like you. Now, get out; I'm infernally busy. Good-bye." And in another second I was again in the street, thinking what a rum one the doctor was, and not quite sure whether or no to be angry with him for his *brusquerie*.

During the interview I had actually not spoken two words. "Recommended me to hunt, did he? Hunt! I wonder what it's like? Fine exercise, no doubt;" and ruminating

thus, I suddenly found myself brought to an anchor by a small crowd, consisting of a parson, two butcher boys, a cabman, and a sweep, who were blocking up the pavement and staring eagerly into the well-known window of Messrs. Fores' print-shop.

"My eye!" says cabby, "doesn't he mean 'avin' of it neither?" pointing as he spoke to that familiar print of Herring's, entitled "Steeplechase Cracks," in which the late Mr. Jim Mason is depicted, with smiling face, riding "Lottery" at a large stone wall which Lord Strathmore and others are already jumping in the easiest style imaginable.

I then cast my eye over some hunting prints after the same artist. "By Jove! it *must* be a fine thing hunting. What an appetite it must give one; and, after all, with a good horse under one, not so difficult either. Why, all those fellows in scarlet, jumping a large fence look as if they were sitting in armchairs. I'll take the doctor's advice, hang me if I don't!"

I felt quite a sporting character, and put on quite a knowing look on the strength of my new resolution to become a disciple of Diana. By way of a beginning I went into the first bookseller's I came to, and bought Delmé Radcliffe's "Noble Science," and, on the shopman's strong recommendation, "Mr Sponge's Sporting Tours" and "Handley Cross" —works, he said, that in his 'umble opinion "no 'unting gentleman ought to be without." I then wended my way carefully to my comfortable rooms in Suffolk Street, expending *en route* all the rest of the money I had with me on a gold horse-shoe pin, a pair of spurs, and a hunting whip. I strutted along, thinking myself a second Nimrod. I actually had visions of myself taking up I don't know how many feet of room on the walls of Burlington House at next year's Royal Academy, depicted in a bran-new red coat, irreproachable leathers, and radiant boots, with a nice fresh pink face (they always give

'em a nice pink face), an amiable smile lighting up my thunder and lightning features, duly described in the catalogue, "Samuel Simkin, Esq., on his favourite hunter, 'Tamaroo.'"

On my appearance in the smoking-room of my club that evening, I shall never forget Jack Wildman's face (Jack is one of the rapid ones of the Stock Exchange) on my asking him what were the odds against "Rataplan" for the Derby. He had his betting book out like a shot as soon as he had got over his astonishment, and laid me the odds to a fiver; which fiver I had the pleasure of paying him some months after—"Rataplan," I rather think, dying about a month before the race, so I did not even have a run for my money. I astonished him still more by asking him if he knew of a horse—a hunter—likely to suit me. Jack told me confidentially, afterwards, that he would willingly have betted 100 to 1 against the double event—

my ever backing a horse for the Derby, and getting on the back of a hunter. I had evidently risen a hundred per cent. in his estimation, for, ringing for a fresh brandy-and-soda, he proceeded to confide in me concerning a clinker he knew of, being kept dark with a view to winning the Liverpool steeplechase. "Between you and me and the post," he whispered confidentially, "he's been tried with "Exciseman," last year's winner, you know, and beat him easy ; he's sure to get in at a little over ten stone, and if he keeps well it's a moral."

I promised to keep the gallant animal (he rejoiced in the name of "Oliver Twist") in my mind's eye, and back him the first opportunity.

He next was good enough to give me a letter of introduction to a friend of his, one Captain Coper. "He's not a captain a bit," said Jack, "but he always knows of a horse ; in fact, that's his profession, amateur horse-dealing. He'll borrow a tenner of you, and

probably get a handsome commission out of the dealer; but he is the most likely man I know to find you what you want. When you have finished your business with him, take my advice and give him the cold shoulder, or you'll find him a nuisance."

Armed with the letter to the bold Captain Coper, I retired to my chamber for the night. I could not sleep a bit when I went to bed—kept tossing and turning about for hours. At last I dozed off, and proceeded to dream that I was riding a match over the Liverpool course with my partner, Lumper, for £1000. I was riding "Oliver Twist," and he "Exciseman." I was winning easily, when, about a hundred yards from home, up there started, under my horse's very nose, the ghost of my late father, his grey hairs sticking straight up with horror. Yes, there he was, his pen behind his ear as usual, and his hands, in one of which was a huge ruler, held up with astonishment. "Oliver Twist" stopped as if

shot, Lumper galloping by me with a demoniacal grin on his face. I went right over "Oliver's" head. Crack comes my unfortunate head on the ground—ough! how hard it is—and I wake to find myself floundering on the floor of my bedroom instead of on the plains of Aintree. I betake myself, rubbing my head, to bed once more, this time to sleep, thank goodness.

After a late breakfast the next morning, I sallied forth in quest of the renowned Captain Coper. Being a gentleman of promiscuous habits and no recognized home, he is occasionally difficult to find. However, on this particular morning, I ran him to ground in the very first cover Jack Wildman told me to draw, viz. Axe's Hotel, Piccadilly.

On inquiring at the bar, I was told he was at that moment in the coffee room; and a waiter, preceding me, goes up to a gentleman of horsey appearance, who is sitting, drinking brandy-and-soda, in company with

three more gentlemen equally sporting in their personal appearance, and making use of the simple words, "A gent for you, Captain," gives one of the tables a dab with his dirty napkin, takes up an empty tumbler, and takes his departure.

"Captain Coper, I believe?" I begin, taking off my hat.

"Yes; my name's Coper," replies that worthy, rather suspiciously, I think, giving me a hearty stare. I overhear one of his friends whisper to another, "A *dun* for old Copy, by Jove!"

"I've brought a note from my friend Wildman," I go on, giving Coper the note.

That worthy reads it over, and his whole demeanour changes instantaneously. "How *are* you?" exclaims he, jumping up and pump-handling me most severely. "Delighted to know you. Let me introduce you; Captain Blackball — Mr. Simkin, Captain Levant, Captain Armstrong.

The captains, one and all, bow most politely, and express their delight at making my acquaintance; that accomplished Coper requests to know what I will drink. I think it best to take something, so I indulge in a brandy-and-soda, and the captains all have their tumblers refilled with the same exhilarating fluid. The conversation I interrupted is then renewed with great vigour; the principal themes being a most barefaced robbery at a suburban steeplechase meeting two or three days before, in which pie they all seemed to have had a finger and profited accordingly, and a funny little story concerning a bill, in which two noblemen, a select covey of Jews, a betting-man or two, and a lady of doubtful reputation were all mixed up, needless to say more or less discreditably—the two peers of the realm, to use the forcible language of the experienced Captain Blackball, getting "five to two" the worst of it.

"So you want a horse, do you?" says Coper, after a bit, taking me confidentially to the window. "Let me see, now," he goes on, tilting his hat on to the bridge of his nose, and chewing his toothpick sedulously; "let me see. There's that little bay mare Jim Whippy druv in his coach this summer. No, she won't do; not up to your weight. That chestnut at the stables in Park Lane—apt to rear a bit, but a nice little horse."

"It must be very quiet," I inform him, "as I am no horseman."

"I'll tell you what, then," says he; "we'll go down to Diddler's, at Knightsbridge, and see what he's got. Go now if you like."

I readily acquiesce; and bidding farewell to the brandy-and-soda drinking, cigar-smoking, flash-looking captains, we sally forth.

Coper is all Jack described him; he is a fine-figured, rather well-bred looking man, and would be good-looking did he not look so abominably dissipated, and slightly dirty into

the bargain. His dress as I have before remarked, is of the horsiest description; and, what with his looks, his costume, and his swagger, he is not altogether the sort of gentleman a young man of steady habits and good character would care to be seen about with much. "*Noscitur ex sociis*," as my late father used to be very fond of saying to me, when warning me against any one he disapproved of. I believe it was about the only piece of Latin he knew so he was constantly bringing it out with great gratification to himself.

After a brisk quarter of an hour's walk, we arrived at Mr. Diddler's stables.

"Mr. Diddler in?" asks Coper of a helper who is busy cleaning a bit outside the saddle-room door.

"In the hoffis, Capen," replied the man.

To the "hoffis" we accordingly wend our way, and, tapping at the door, it is opened by the great Mr. Diddler in person. As I

looked him over, I thought I had never seen such a neat little man in my life. His fresh-coloured and rather good-looking face is set off by a very well-shaped and carefully brushed hat, which he has a habit of tilting on to his nose as he talks; his shirt-collar is fastened with a silver snaffle in place of the ordinary stud, and he sports a natty black and white bird's-eye tie fashioned into a bow. He wears a short single-breasted jacket of some dark mixture; then come a pair of remarkably well made, well-put-on brown cords, broad in the ridge and furrow, meeting in their turn a pair of patent leather blucher boots, simply perfect in their fit and look of comfort to the foot. He is on extremely good, not to say familiar, terms with the "Capt'in," as he calls him; nay, I cannot help thinking that, if I were not there, he would drop the "captain" altogether and call him plain Coper.

On learning my wants he remarks that he believes he has the very thing. "Come this

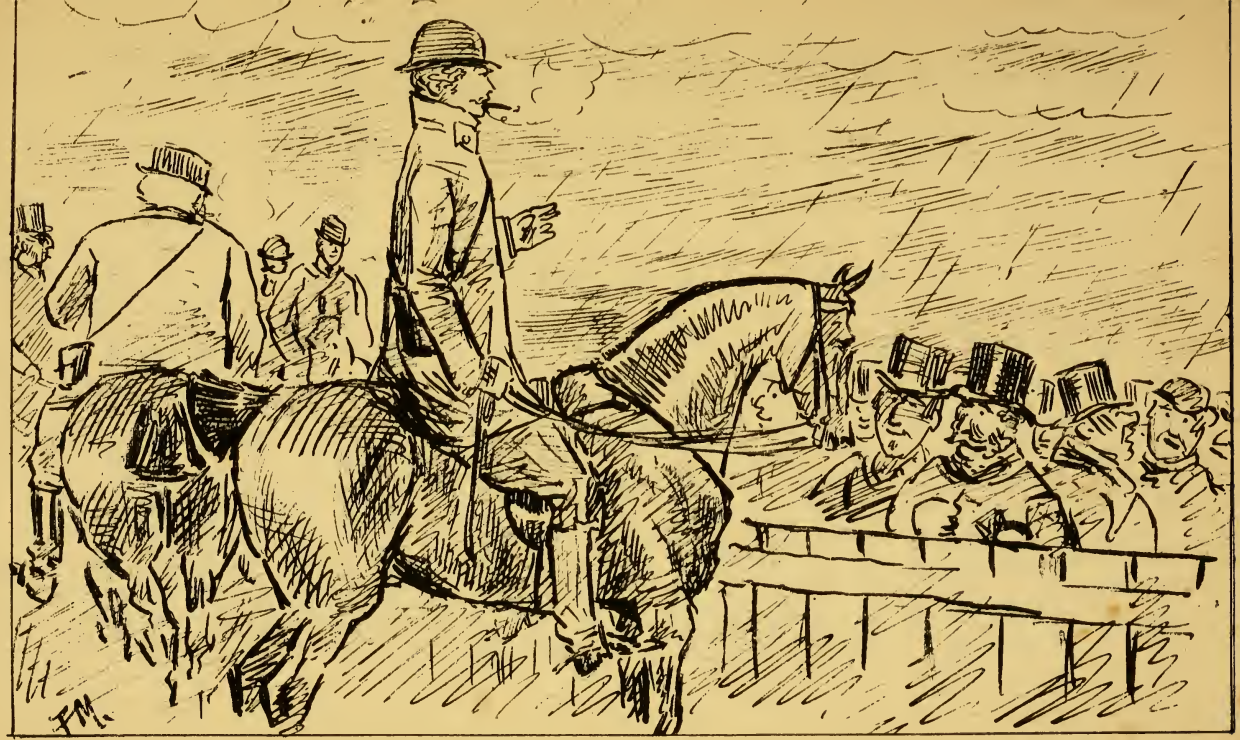
way, sir. Now, here's a little bay 'oss in here I'll show you, but if you are at all timid, why, I wouldn't altogether recommend 'im to you. A gent got on his back yesterday, and rode 'im in the Park for a little bit; came back and said he was a mad 'oss. '*Mad!*' I says to myself. '*You're* mad. With the 'ands of *hiron* you've got, no wonder the 'oss is fidgety.'"

We inspect the "mad 'oss"—a not bad-looking well-bred bay, but anything but a kind-looking animal, as he lays back his ears and shows the whites of a very wicked pair of eyes.

"Now," says Mr. Diddler, turning the key of the next box, "I *think* you'll say this 'oss I'm now going to show you is a *gentleman*."

He then opens the door with a flourish. We enter, and see before us a little grey horse, who certainly, to my ignorant eye, quite comes up in his personal appearance to his owner's flattering description.

"Pass your 'and over 'im, sir," says Diddler, "pass your 'and over 'im; he won't bite or kick either. It's only his fun, the playful rogue," he continues, as the horse, on my approach, lays his ears back, and arches his back. "He's looking about for a piece of sugar—ain't you, my boy? I bought this little 'oss off Lord William Lovelace, of the 3rd Lancers; he sold out and went abroad, consequently had no further use for 'im. You'll know Lord William, no doubt. His sister, Lady Heva, she made a regular pet of the 'oss: used to give 'im grapes and sugar 'arf the day. She wanted once actually to 'ave 'im up into the dining-room to luncheon, to see if he'd eat *souffly* pudding—ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Diddler; "but her pa and ma, the Hearl and Countess of Longacre, fond as they are of her ladyship, couldn't stand that, you know. Lady Heva cried her pretty eyes out nearly when her brother sold 'im. 'Grey Peter' 'is name is.



LORD WILLIAM LOVELACE. LATE OWNER OF GREY PETER.

(SKETCHED AT NEWMARKET)

She drove up here in her victoria one day; I 'appened to be standing at the entrance to the yard as she arrived. 'Mr. Diddler,' says she, 'my brother tells me you've bought 'is little grey 'oss, "Grey Peter"?' 'I have, my lady,' I says. 'Oh, Mr. Diddler,' she says, 'be kind to 'im for *my* sake,' she says, and the tears came welling up in her pretty v'ilet heyes as she spoke; it made me feel quite choky," said the soft-hearted Diddler, coughing, and giving his neck a grip as he spoke, as if the remembrance of this affecting little episode quite overpowered him. "'Be kind to 'im for my sake,' says her ladyship; 'and oh, Mr. Diddler, if you hever should sell 'im, do try and get 'im a good 'ome; and let me hear from time to time 'ow he is, the *dear*, *darling* little 'oss.' I promised her faithfully, and she shook 'ands with me and drove away quite 'appy. If Lord William had kept 'im he'd have won his regimental steeplechase with 'im to a moral certainty, that he would.

'Owever, poor young gent, he was pretty nearly as fast as his little grey 'oss, and was forced to sell out—more's the pity.

"Well, sir, I've told you all about 'im You want an 'ack—there you are, perfect both in looks and manners. You want a hunter—there you are again, he'll never put you down ; and there's nothing you need fear riding at with any hounds in any county. He's good at every description of fence. I should like to sell 'im to you, sir, first, because I always like to accommodate a friend of the Capt'in here ; and secondly, I should feel sure that in handing 'im over to you he would get, what I am so hanxious to procure for 'im, a good comfortable 'ome. Two 'underd and fefty is his price, and dirt cheap, too. I should ask three 'underd for 'im to any one else, but being a friend of the Capt'in's and all, I don't mind parting with 'im for that."

"Dear me! that's a deal of money," say I.

"Well, sir," rejoins Diddler, "you've

described to me the sort of 'oss you require, and 'appening to 'ave that very 'oss, why, I show 'im alone, without showing you a lot of 'osses that I know wouldn't suit you at any price. Now, if you was a bold devil-may-care rider, and you come to me, and you were to say, 'Diddler, I want an 'oss to 'unt this season, I don't care particler about a screw being loose; he can kick, or rear, or bolt, or anything: it's no odds, as long as he can go' —why, I could probably supply you with one for perhaps sixty or seventy pund, even as low as fefty, very likely; but such a one as this little grey I'll defy you to get anywhere for less money than I am asking. 'Owever, don't let me press you, sir, don't let me press you; I am only too 'appy to 'ave shown you Lady Heva's old pet. Shut the door, Thomas; and come into my office, sir, and take a glass of sherry before you go."

So saying, Mr. Diddler leads us back to his sanctum, where he produces some excellent

brown sherry and a box of cigars, to both of which Coper does full justice.

"Excuse me for 'arf a minute, sir," says Mr. Diddler, "whilst I go and speak a word to my man;" and he gracefully retires.

"Well," says Captain Coper, directly he is gone, "what'll you do about the grey? If you will take my advice, you'll buy him. I really think he's a cheap horse. What say you? If you buy him you must give me a mount on him some fine day. I'll shove him along. Capital cigars these; I'll pocket a couple." The gallant officer is as good as his word; rather better, for he pockets at least half a dozen. He also helps himself freely to sherry.

In the course of ten minutes Mr. Diddler returned, and, to cut a long story short, I offered him two hundred for his horse. But that worthy was firm; not a halfpenny less than his price would he take; so at last I had to harden my heart, and walked out of

Mr. Diddler's premises a poorer man by two hundred and fifty golden guineas, and the proud possessor of that paragon of perfection, the little grey nag, "Grey Peter."

The next thing to be done was to get hold of a groom, and again was the useful Coper consulted. Did he know of a likely servant? Of course he did; Tom Dapper, if he had not got a place, was the very man. At present, he (Coper) believed he was at Latherington's stables, in the Edgware Road, doing odd jobs, such as driving old dowagers about the town, and, in fact, making himself generally useful. As luck would have it, he was going to Latherington's that very afternoon, and if Mr. Dapper was to be had, he would tell him to call on me. We stopped at the corner of Park Lane; and borrowing a "fiver," as he called it, from me, Coper swaggered off, and I strolled on, meditating on my morning's work, to the club.

The next morning, as the clock struck

ten, a knock was heard at the front door, and Mr. Dapper was ushered into my presence, and, after sundry questions satisfactorily answered, was duly engaged. Two days afterwards saw the redoubtable "Grey Peter" and himself comfortably settled down at the Plantagenet Arms Hotel, at Whichford, in Crampshire which place I intended to make my starting-point when I hunted with that renowned pack of foxhounds, "The Old Harkaway," or, as they are usually termed, the O.H.H.

My next move was to equip myself in a proper manner for the chase. Great was the astonishment of my tailor in the city on my ordering my red coat.

"I presoom, sir," said Mr. Snips, "you require it for a fancy ball."

"*Fancy ball!*" I exclaimed, in huge indignation. "*Certainly not!* I want it to hunt in, of course."

"O-o-oh!" said Mr. Snips. "I 'umbly

beg pardon ; I had no idea, sir, you was in the habit of following the 'ounds."

Boots, breeches, hat, hat-string, sherry-flask, whip, spurs, everything ordered necessary for a votary of Diana, I next proceeded to Mr. Gambado's riding-school, in St. John's Wood, to work out three guineas' worth of hunting lessons. I went at it steadily every day for a week, and after several falls, and the loss of three hats irretrievably smashed, I thought myself tolerably competent to take the field.

The first of November was close at hand, but, alas! I could not go out, as my top-boots had not been sent home. So I wrote and told Mr. Tom Dapper to take the grey out on the opening day and show him the hounds, and to be sure and ride him quietly. The O.H.H. were to meet at the kennels on the 1st, about five miles from Whichford. When the morning came, I thought to myself, as I lay tossing about in bed, "I wish to goodness

I could sport my new clothes to-day. What a nuisance those boots not having come! Stop. Why shouldn't I run down to Whichford, and drive over to the meet, and have a look at the hounds?"

No sooner said than done. I jumped out of bed, dressed as quickly as possible, and, swallowing a cup of tea, bustled off to Euston Square, where I just caught the train. Most of the hunting men had come down by the previous train, so on reaching Whichford, I found it would be all I should do to get to the meet in time. My groom had started off on "Grey Peter" nearly an hour before. I ordered a dogcart and a man to drive, and after a hasty breakfast, off we started.

After about three miles' driving, during which my driver beguiled the time by telling me the owners of the numerous country houses we passed, we got more into the open country; and, turning sharp round a corner, we suddenly dropped upon a knot of about a

dozen farmers and grooms, who were staring intently at something going on the other side of the hedge. We pulled up to have a look, too; and, standing up in the dogcart, I beheld in the distance, about three fields off, two horses, a grey and a brown, coming along as hard as ever they can lay legs to the ground.

"Oh, he's a clever little 'oss, that grey. Look at that! My wig, how he jumps!" says an enthusiastic farmer.

"Here they come! Why, I'm blowed if he ain't agoin' at the gate!" says another.

Sure enough, the man on the grey, instead of going at the fence, goes out of his line and rides straight at the gate, evidently a brand-new one, painted white. Over they go. Well jumped indeed! The grey flew at it as if there was I don't know what the other side. His rider now pulls him into a canter, then into a trot, and joins us in the road; the brown horse, evidently outpaced, and badly ridden into the bargain, labouring behind.

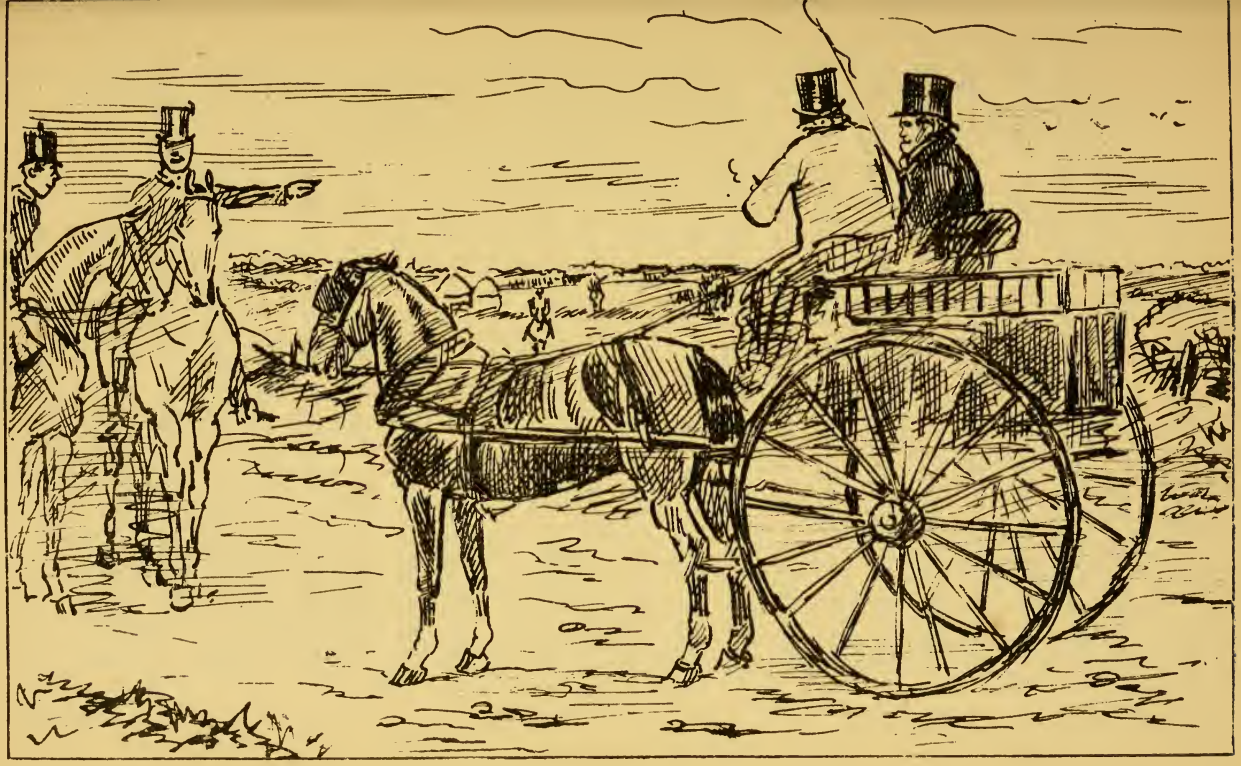
"Well done, Tommy!" holloas a groom at my elbow to the breathless rider of the clever grey horse.

But—good gracious! what's this? Can it be? Why, hang me if it is not my own horse, "Grey Peter," and that rascal of a groom, Tom Dapper! Curse his impudence!

That worthy, attired, if you please, in a shooting jacket in a particularly loud plaid pattern, and a pair of very neat breeches and boots, does not see me, and having received the congratulations of his friends, proceeds calmly to light a cigar; and now, dash my buttons if he is not going to refresh himself with a pull from my long sherry-flask, which he has fastened to the saddle. This is too much.

"*Thomas!*" I shout, frowning as fiercely as I possibly can at him.

He looks up and catches my angry eye, and for a moment is evidently much confused. His friends, putting their tongues in their cheeks, slink off.



"MY GROOM CAUGHT RED HANDED"

Mr. Dapper very soon recovers his native impudence, and coming straight up to the dogcart, and touching his hat, proceeds to tell me a perfect avalanche of lies—"'Ow the little grey 'oss was so very fresh and above hisself, that he thought he had better give 'im a canter afore showing of 'im the 'ounds. Just as he was agoin' along quite quiet, hup comes Joe Gardner, Mr. White's grum. The little grey 'oss, 'earin' Joe come powderin' along behind, kicks hup 'is 'eels, nearly chuckin' 'im, Tom Dapper, hover 'is 'ead" (I wish to heavens he had), "and taking the bit 'tween his teeth, goes horf as 'ard as hever he could split. Joe's 'oss, seeing the little gery 'oss go like that, just does likewise, and follers of 'im; but, Lor' bless yer, sir," said the impudent Dapper, with a self-satisfied grin on his face, "do you think this little 'oss" (patting his neck as he spoke) "was agoin' to let 'im come anigh 'im? Not he—no, not if they had galloped on for a fortnight

he wouldn't. Has for me a-tryin' to 'old 'im, it was downright folly."

At this point I venture to tell him that I don't believe a word of his story, and that I am perfectly certain he and the other groom were racing for their own amusement.

"Him race 'is master's 'osses! Him! Well, he was 'urt. He wouldn't do sich a thing, no, not for worlds. He would throw up his situation that werry day; and has for the trifling amount of celery howin', he wouldn't haccept it on no account: the bare suspicion of doing such a thing was more than he could bear."

The end of all this is that I have to eat humble pie and almost beg my conscientious servant to stay on, so very indignant is he at the idea of his integrity being doubted.

By this time the reader may imagine it was too late to get to the meet in time to see the fun; so, ordering Mr. Dapper to ride quietly home, I told my grinning Jehu to turn round and drive back to the inn.

I ascertained on inquiry that in the following week the hounds were to meet at "Elderberries," one of their very best meets, so I determined to choose that fixture for my first appearance in the hunting field. Ordering Mr. Dapper only to exercise "Grey Peter" until then, and on no accouut to hunt him, I betook myself back to town.

That evening my top-boots arrived, so the next morning, after breakfast, I arrayed myself in full hunting costume, and had a good look at myself in the cheval glass. I was considerably pleased with my appearance, and felt quite the Nimrod.

At last the important day arrived. I prepared myself for it by going to bed early the night before, only indulging in one brandy-and-soda and one cigar in the course of the evening. Euston Square reached, I discovered several brother sportsmen, in various descriptions of greatcoats, all going to the same destination.

I got into a carriage in which were three swells, who, I very soon discovered from their conversation, were in some cavalry regiment. In one corner of the carriage sat a particularly crusty-looking old gentleman, evidently not going to hunt, who proceeded to light a huge cigar, then to wrap himself up comfortably in a rug made of some foreign foxes' skins, with the brushes dangling outside; that accomplished, he gave a scowl all round, and settled himself well down to the *Times*.

The three young swells opposite him laughed and chattered like a lot of magpies, making an awful row, much to the crusty old gent's disgust, who kept looking up from his *Times* and glaring at them most indignantly. It only made them worse, and at last I heard the liveliest of the three whisper to his comrades, "I'll have such a lark directly with the old buffer."

We had not to wait long, for this cheerful

young man, after staring at the unconscious old gentleman's rug for about three minutes, suddenly said in a loud voice, very slowly and solemnly, "I smell a fox"—as he spoke, throwing up his head and sniffing—"I smell a fox. Tally ho!" he suddenly shouted, at the top of his voice, nearly making the old gentleman jump out of his skin. He then quickly whipped out a knife from his breeches pocket, and in another second had cut off one of the foxes' brushes from the old gent's rug. "Who-hoop!" shouted he, waving it over his head, "Who-hoop!" Down went the window, and crying, "Worry! worry! worry!" away went the brush out of it to imaginary hounds. That feat accomplished he sank back into his seat and roared with laughter, joined by his two friends. I could not help laughing myself.

As for the old gentleman, I never saw a man in such a rage; his face turned perfectly purple. He shook his fist in the face

of his enemy, and gasped out—for he could scarcely articulate with rage—"Your name and address, you—you—you d——d young scoundrel?"

The mischievous plunger laughed louder than ever, and I really think the old gentleman would have pitched into him, but luckily just at that moment the train stopped.

"Whichford! Whichford! Change here for Stackmansworth!" shouted a porter. Out jumped the old gentleman like a harlequin; out got the three plungers.

"Now, then, you vagabond," said the old boy collaring his man, and pulling out his note-book and pencil, "I insist on you giving me your name and address."

"All right, guv'nor; pop it down, old chap. Captain ——" he begins.

"Captain," writes the old gentleman. "Well, sir, go on."

"I'll tell you the rest another time," replies the plunger. And, so saying, he pulls

the old fellow's travelling cap well over his eyes, and runs off, followed by his friends; and is halfway down the station stairs before his victim can extricate himself. When he does, he stamps and raves, and curses like a madman.

"Hany more for the Liverpool train?" shouts a porter. "Now, sur, are you going on? Train's just starting."

The poor gentleman is going to Liverpool, so he was obliged to go off, after all, without discovering his enemy's name.

"Halloo!" exclaims a cheery voice at my elbow. "Fancy seeing you here!" and turning round, I beheld the jolly countenance of my friend John Bustleby beaming with good nature from under a velvet cap.

John is, like myself, in the city, and hunts regularly, as luck will have it, with the O.H.H. In fact, he keeps his three horses at the Plantagenet Arms, so he will be able to put me in the way of things.

Away we go to our hotel to look after the horses. "Grey Peter" is ready saddled and turned round in his stable. Very blooming and cocky he looks as he is led out; he seems to like the look of a red coat. John Bustleby expresses his opinion that he looks like going all over; and he certainly feels like it, moving jauntily along, like a cat on hot bricks.

We have got about six miles to ride before we get to the meet, so we jog on a bit. Turning sharp round a corner, we suddenly come upon the hounds, the huntsmen and whips dressed in yellow plush. The grey gets disagreeably excited at the sight of them, turning his head about, and jerking at his bit, until the reins keep slipping through my fingers.

"Jezebel! Jezebel!" holloas a whip. Jezebel is close to my horse's heels; I hope to goodness he won't kick.

Jig, jog, jiggle, joggle, on we go. At

last we come to a village, the inhabitants of which turn out *en masse* to greet us. "Look at the pretty fox-dogs," the women tell their children.

Just out of the village are the park gates of "Elderberries." It has recently been sold, and its new proprietor took the first opportunity of adding on "Park" to its old title of "Elderberries." The natives, however, still call it by the old name, and probably will for years to come. The house is at the top of a hill; and getting on the grass, the huntsmen and whips put their horses into a canter—an example we follow, the grey testifying his delight at getting on the turf by giving a tremendous kick up, sending me well on to his neck. I was as near off as a toucher. Luckily it's uphill now, so I just let him go.

The hounds pull up in front of the house, a rather gloomy-looking mansion; and now comes disaster No. 1. The hounds stopped

so suddenly that I could not pull up the grey in time; the consequence is that he goes yawing and boring, pulling my arms off nearly, straight at the pack; and, before one can say Jack Robinson, we are bang in the middle of them. The lady pack, too. Barmaid and Termagant run yelping away; Gay Lass, the best bitch in the pack, gets a hot one in the ribs; Brilliant is sent flying one way, Dorothy another. There is a regular hullabaloo.

The huntsman and master—the latter was on foot, and narrowly escaped being knocked over—abuse me most frightfully, whilst the grey gallops on until he is brought to by a wire fence into a belt running along the side of the park, which, luckily for me, he does not take it into his head to jump. I then sneak back again, good John Bustleby meeting me half way; and I get him to apologize, for the grey's bad behaviour, to the master who is a friend of his. There is not much damage done, luckily.

John then proceeds to point out the great guns of the hunt to me. "There, see that tall, thin man, in pink and high jack-boots; his name's Lobb, and he's far and away the best man here—you go where he goes, and you'll be in at the finish, I know. The odd-looking man he's talking to, with a cap and the yellow handkerchief round his neck, is the eccentric William Maple. What a bird he is! There are hundreds of stories of him and his oddities. I'll tell you one rare good thing he once did. He came down from town by the last train one night to Whichford; his house being about three miles from there, and his carriage not being there to meet him, he hired a fly. When about a mile from home he very quietly opened the door, and, jumping out, got over a fence and reached home by a short cut about a quarter of an hour before the fly. Down jumped the flyman and rang the front-door bell. Down comes the butler: says he, 'What do you want this time of

night?' 'Wot do I want? that's a good un,' says the flyman. 'Why, I've brought Mr. Maple, to be sure, from the station.' 'Brought Mr. Maple! Why, you must be dreaming, man alive; he's been abed long ago.' The flyman opens the door of the carriage, and can scarcely believe his eyes when he finds it empty. To increase his wonder, down comes William Maple himself, in his dressing-gown, to know what all the noise is about. However, after a bit, the flyman is told the trick that has been played him; and, putting his horse up, he and the butler spend a pleasant evening together."

The majority of the field seems composed of Londoners. "That fat man there," says John, "is Mr. Pell, the great candlemaker. The party in black, on the good-looking chestnut, is Mr. Varnish, the well-known upholsterer. The man in pink yonder is Barege, the haberdasher, of Regent Street—subscribes his fifty to the hounds, does

Barege. The chap in gig-lamps, on the piebald, is Green, the army tailor''—and so on.

The hounds now begin to move off, and "Grey Peter" begins to fidget horribly. "Woh! you brute. Keep still, do."

"We'd better jog on," says John.

So we follow in their wake, the grey going along sideways and sweating with excitement, the reins slipping through my fingers every minute. "Woh! do."

In fiv eminutes' time we arrive at the cover, a beautiful bit of gorse running up the side of a hill. The hounds are in as we get there.

"Hoick to Governess! Ho-o-o-i-c-k!" cheers the huntsman.

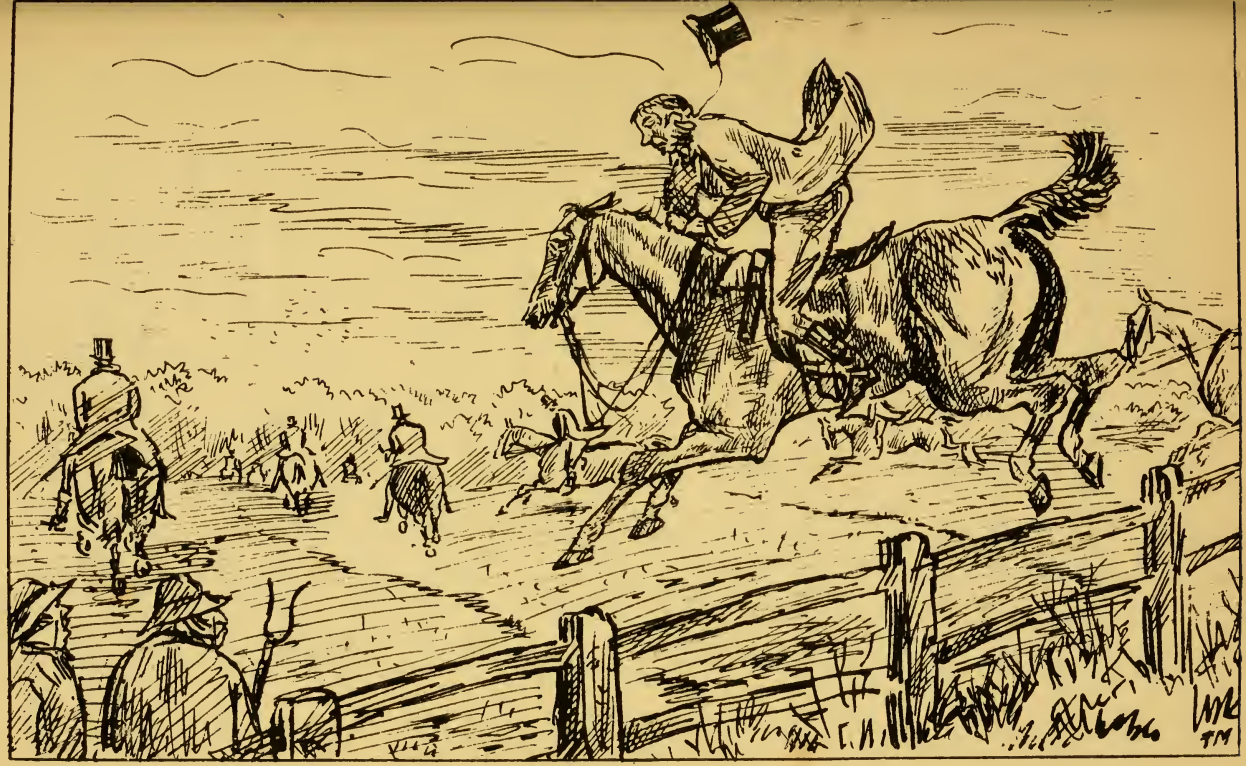
"There he is!" shouts a farmer at my elbow, standing up in his stirrups.

What a bustle there is in a second! The grey quivers with excitement. The farmer is right; the fox who was probably curled

up fast asleep, jumps up right under old Priestess's very nose.

"There's music for you!" says an excited old gentleman in scarlet, at my side.

Away gallop the field like a charge of cavalry. The grey, mad with excitement, gets his head down, and we are off like a shot out of a gun. Bang we go up against a lady in a velvet cap and grey habit trimmed with black braid, *à la hussar*. "Woh! you infernal brute." I fancy, as we go by like the wind, I hear the words "Confounded muff!" issue from the lips of the fair horsewoman. A flight of rails is in view. There is a gate through which the crowd is hustling; I try and guide the grey to it. Not a bit of it. A sporting, black-bearded farmer on a young good-looking chestnut, and a swell in scarlet, go at the rails, and before I can say knife "Grey Peter" is in the air. I thought we should never come down. Landing with a tremendous jolt, both my feet get



GREY PETER JUMPS A TRIFLE BIG.

out of the stirrups, my reins are nowhere, and in another second I find myself rolling on the ground on my back. I make a grab at the reins, which "Grey Peter" acknowledges with a hearty kick, curse him! as he gallops off.

The farmer in front of me, looking round and seeing what has happened, catches the grey as he comes up, and politely holds him until I run up to him, puffing and blowing, for I am quite exhausted. I wish with all my heart he had let him go. "Now, sir, jump up; hounds are running like smoke," says he, throwing me the reins.

I scramble up somehow, and follow my new friend through a hand gate into a small cover and down a ride, the grey going better now he is with another horse. There is a stile out of the wood, and from it we see the backs of the leading division topping the fence out of the field beyond.

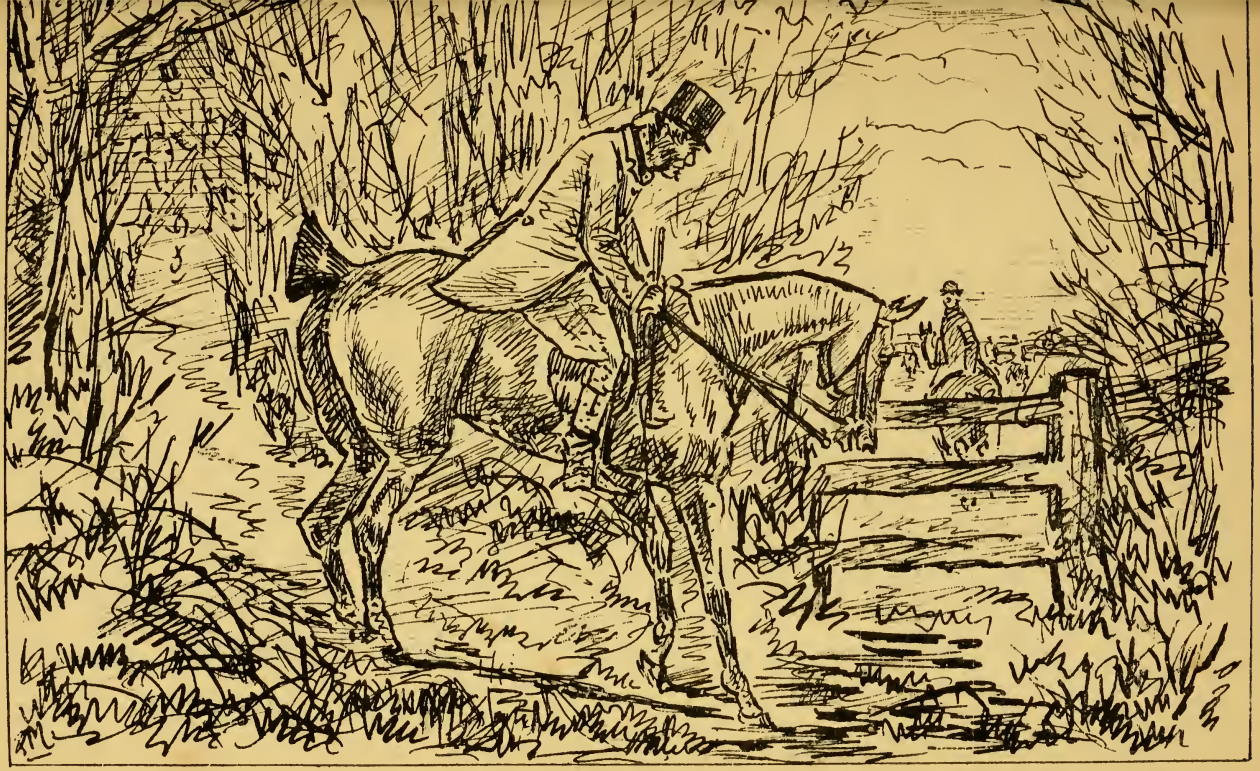
The farmer's mind is made up on the spot; he runs his horse best pace at the stile. "It's

nothing of a place," he shouts, turning round in his saddle as he lands.

I daren't brave it; the more I look the less I like it. I persuade myself very easily that it is a very nasty place; so I turn the disappointed "Grey Peter" down a side ride, hoping to find a friendly gate.

Alas! when I get to the end of the ride I only find a fence, on the other side of which is a cottage, with garden attached, in which latter an old woman in a huge bonnet is digging away like fun. I see that the other side of the cottage is the high-road, along which are no end of red-coated sportsmen pounding along. There is a nice gap in the fence, too, so I take the grey back a few paces preparatory to putting him boldly at it.

At this moment the old woman, looking up from her digging, suddenly catches sight of me. She makes gallantly for the gap, three-pronged fork in hand, and stands there in a menacing attitude, like an Amazon of old.



COME ON ITS NOTHING OF A PLACE

"No, no, my good man," says she, in a shrill treble voice. "My grandmother to that! You don't come over 'ere, a gallerpin' and tramplin' over my garding—not while I'm here, leastways. Why, what the drowse (deuce) d'ye mean? You go and take yer nasty rid coat away from here."

Bother this horrid old creature! she won't listen to reason. The longer I talk the worse she gets. At last a happy thought strikes me; I'll try bribery. So I begin with the offer of half-a-crown. No, not a bit of it. Five shillings, then. "Well, five shillin' do I say? Well, perhaps if I give her five shillin', her good man, when he comes home, won't say so much about my tramplin' over the garding stuff."

So that bargain concluded, I throw the old lady two half-crowns, and she promptly removes herself away from the gap in the hedge.

I put the grey in the most gallant manner

at it, and we get over beautifully, and, crossing the "garding," are soon in the road. The grey, catching sight of a red coat pounding along in front, begins to pull once more, and breaks into a canter. Clatter, clatter, clatter we go along the stony road. We soon managed to pass the hindmost sportsmen. I don't care a rap now we are out of those horrid fields—like the highwayman, my song is "Hurrah for the Road!" I don't know where the hounds are, and don't care either; I can't see them anywhere, and, what is more, don't want to.

By-and-bye I pass two more fat sportsmen, very red in the face, and perspiring muchly.

"Where are the 'ounds?" cries one fatty, as I pass at a hand canter.

I point straight forward with my whip. What a sportsman he no doubt thinks me!

I like this much—nothing to stop us. I hope we may go along the road for miles. Ough! My horse suddenly shies at a wheelbarrow;

NEVER HOLLOA UNTILL YOU ARE OUT OF THE WOOD.

in a second I am floundering in the road, my hat smashed, and my clothes all mud, and my horse with his head up and feet out, tugging at the reins, which I luckily have hold of. Oh, I'll never come out hunting again! Up come the fatties I passed just now, puffing and wheezing like so many grampuses.

"'Ope you're not hurt, sir," says one.

"No, all right, thank you;" and on they go.

That brute "Grey Peter" will not stand still. "Woh! you confounded beast!" I make a dive at the stirrup, which I miss. "Will you stand still, sir?"

"Stop a bit, master, whilst I 'old un for ye," says a grinning ploughman, the other side of the hedge, whom I had not observed. Good-natured Mr. Chawbacon clambers ponderously over the fence, and jumps down from the bank much in the clumsy sort of way an elephant would; and with his assistance

I once more clamber up into my saddle, and having endowed my rustic friend with a shilling, again start on my journey.

I am so tired I should like to walk, if "Grey Peter" would let me, which he won't. I think I will have a sandwich, also a drop of sherry. I have just unscrewed the top of my flask, and stuffed my mouth with a sandwich, when —what makes my horse suddenly prick up his ears and neigh? It's those confounded hounds again. Twang, twang, twang, goes a horn in the distance, and—what's that? By Jove! its a fox. Dead beat, too—even I can see that. He crosses the road, is through the fence, and stealing away across the field beyond.

"Tally ho!" I holloa, as well as I can with my mouth full. "Yow, yow, yow!" I see them now plainly two fields off. Here they come, the huntsman close up. A lady next, by Jove! How well she jumped that fence! And by the powers, only about four

other people with them, one of them the man in jack-boots, Mr. Lobb. Over the fence, into the road, scramble the hounds, bristling for blood; they cross like a flash of lightning. Pretty sight! pretty sight! Over goes the huntsman, then Mr. Lobb, then the lady. The grey can stand it no longer, but just takes the bit between his teeth and goes at the fence fifty miles an hour. How I stick on I don't know, and we are half across the pasture beyond before I know where we are. A rustic holds open the gate into the next field, and with some difficulty I manage to steer the grey through it. Mr. Lobb and the lady, who I heard him call Miss Kitty, jump the fence, and are now galloping along side by side.

At the end of the next field is a pretty little house, and over the iron railings in front of it the hounds are now clambering. I notice as soon as they are over they turn sharp to the left. My grey, pulling hard,

puts his resolute head straight for the rails, notwithstanding all my efforts to stop him or turn him. I have often read in the papers of the fearful accidents arising from wire fences ; so, determined not to be killed, if I could help it, I threw myself off as he rose in the air, and rolled over and over like a rabbit on the trim lawn. The grey with a neigh of delight, kicks up his heels and gallops all over the lawn. He then jumps the rails again, nearly landing on old Rosamond, who is rather behindhand.

Well, this is a pretty go! Here am I, in front of a gentleman's house, half stunned, very dirty, and horseless. I was just considering what to do, when I heard some one shout, "Here's another of those trespassing scoundrels! Seize him, Watch! seize him, good dog!" And forth from one of the French windows of the house, opening on to the lawn, bounces a little old gentleman purple with rage, in a green and red

dressing-gown, and slippers to match, armed with a huge stick, and bounding after him, barking horribly, comes a great black yard-dog.

I can't stand this, so I turn tail and make a rush at the rails. Unfortunately, scrambling over, my spur catches in one of the bars, and down I go on my face the other side. The beast of a dog comes over with a rush and a bound, right atop of me. If he were a terrier he would probably go straight at my neck; as it is, he begins at my coat-tails, which he tears off one by one. He then goes at my breeches, and in spite of my kicking, gives me a fearful bite.

"Murder! murder!" I shout at the top of my voice.

The old gentleman, puffing and blowing, is now getting over the rails, thank goodness.

"Down, Watch! down, sir!—Now sir," begins he, as I slowly rise, "what do you mean by trespassing on my lawn in that

disgraceful way? Are you aware, sir—— Good God! what! Samuel?" he suddenly exclaims.

"What! Uncle Joe?" I ejaculate feebly.

The old gentleman, in truth, is no other than my uncle Joseph Buzzer. I had heard he had retired from business, and had bought a little place somewhere in Crampshire, but had no idea where.

"My dear uncle," I began, penitently, "I am extremely sorry."

"Oh, Samuel, Samuel!" said Uncle Joe "what would your poor father have said could he have beheld you in this costoom? I wouldn't have believed it of you, Samuel, unless I had seen it with my own eyes.—Down, Watch, down!" (that redoubtable dog will keep sniffing suspiciously at my legs).—"Come into the house, for goodness sake."

So, having gathered up my smashed hat, my whip, and my coat tails, torn of by Watch, I followed Uncle Joe into the house.

"Hemma!" he bawls directly we get into the little hall, "Hemma, come and see the trespasser. Who d'ye think it is?"

His pretty daughter and only child, Emma, comes running downstairs. "What! Cousin Sam? Goodness gracious, what a state you are in!"

I am indeed in a state, and without loss of time proceed to Uncle Joe's room, where I not only have a good wash, but borrow some of his clothes, including a pair of trousers, for his brute of a dog has done for my leather breeches. After a bit down I came, and found a sumptuous luncheon set out, my uncle bringing out some curious brown sherry

I found out that since he had been settled in Crampshire he had been nearly worried to death by hounds of one kind or another. First, Her Majesty's Staghounds paid him a visit, the stag bucking about all over his kitchen garden, and knocking him (Uncle

Joe) over on his back. Then came a scratch pack with a bay fox, which wretched animal took refuge in his greenhouse, the hounds after him, playing old gooseberry with the flower-pots. The O.H.H., too, last winter, had paid him several unwelcome visits.

I promised him that in future I would eschew the chase; in fact, on my own account, let alone his, I was thoroughly and completely disgusted with it.

"Grey Peter" was brought back with a bad over-reach, and dead lame. It appeared that the hounds ran into their fox in the open, about two miles from my uncle's house, "Grey Peter" well in front; he pulled up when they killed, and the huntsman, recognizing him, gave him a cut with his whip and started him off, and he appears to have galloped and jumped himself to a standstill.

At Uncle Joseph's earnest solicitation, I telegraphed to town for my things, and paid

him a fortnight's visit at his little house, "The Myrtles." At the end of that fortnight I discovered that I liked his daughter Emma better than anybody in the world, and was delighted to find that I was anything but indifferent to her—in short, I proposed and was accepted. Uncle Joe was as pleased as Punch, and he testified his delight that evening by producing some extremely curious madeira, that, on the top of a skinful of claret, was too much for the worthy old gentleman, who had to be helped to bed by myself and the man-servant.

Emma, I am pleased to say, is now my wife.

"Grey Peter" may be seen most days of the week, in the afternoon, waiting for me at my office with the brougham, behaving himself with much more decorum than he did in the hunting field.

Watch has become one of my best friends.

My wife, who is sitting, as I write, read-

ing the last new novel, looks up with one of her cheerful smiles; and I think, when I look at her, how out of evil often comes good, and what a lucky thing it was I went hunting that day. One of Uncle Joe's standing jokes with me is that, "though werry unsuccessful after the fox, I was werry good in chasing the dear (deer)." I have never troubled the hounds since that day, and don't suppose I ever shall. However, as the great Dr. Cupper insists on my taking plenty of exercise, I have taken a small place a short distance from Uncle Joe's, where my wife and I disport ourselves at lawn tennis. With that healthy amusement, and plenty of country walks, I find that my brain is swept pretty clean of cobwebs. Occasionally, in our walks, my wife and I catch a glimpse of my old friends the O.H.H., yellow coats and all. Good sport to them!

My tale is told. All I have to say in conclusion is that, though I don't wish for it

over again, still I shall never regret, as long as I live, "My Day with the Hounds."

Says Uncle Joe, "No, more you hought, you dog!"

Says my wife—nothing, but squeezes my arm, and gives me a kiss, for all that.

"THE FAYRE ONE WITH YE GOLDEN LOCKS."

CHAPTER I.

"NEVER mind old fellow; 'Faint heart never won fair lady,' you know. Take my advice, don't go near the cruel one until after the hunt steeplechase, this day week, is over. In the meantime, ride 'Becky Sharp' in her gallops steadily every day, go to bed early, eschew too much brandy-and-soda and too many cigars, keep cool, and win the big race in a canter. Go to the ball that night, and I'll bet you my commission to a bottle of soda water that, by supper-time, you'll have not

only won the hunt cup, but the 'Fayre One with ye Golden Locks' into the bargain."

So spake Cousin Charlie Moore, captain of the 106th Dragoon Guards—qualifying his speech with a huge draught of gin and seltzer, lighting a fresh cigar, and composing himself in the easiest of armchairs for my reply.

Before I go any further, I must inform my readers who Cousin Charlie is, who I am, and who the young lady designated by him "The Fayre One with ye Golden Locks;" and as the play-writers have it, the whole argument of the piece, and the reason for the afore-given lecture.

I, John George Arthur Temple, commonly called, by nearly all those I number amongst my intimate friends, "Johnnie," am the only son of my mother (and she is a widow), am just turned three-and-twenty, and am the proud possessor of £4,000 a year, four hunters (including the fore-mentioned "Becky

Sharp"), two harness horses, a hack, and a clever pony, a brace of pointers, two terriers, and a retriever.

I live here all alone with my mother, and my address (for the benefit of the curious) is Ryslip House, Bedbury, Blankshire.

Ryslip House, standing in its own grounds, beautifully wooded, and within reach of three packs of foxhounds, as the auctioneers would describe it.

I ought to be a happy man, says every one, with all these advantages; but I am not, unfortunately—very far from it.

I am in love!

Yes, it is too true—cruel, cruel Blanche Dashwood! for the last six months I have been utterly unable to get your wicked blue eyes and wavy golden hair out of my mind. Why do I shoot so badly, day after day, missing rocketer after rocketer, tailoring hares, and letting that sporting bird the woodcock fly gaily by unseen? until the old

keeper, who has lived here all his life, says he can't make it out at all, what Master Johnnie is up tew with hisself. Why do I, when I take up the paper, find myself suddenly reading it carefully upside down?

Why do I come down looking so seedy in the morning, that I cause my fond mother to exclaim, "Johnnie, Johnnie, I am *sure* you smoke too much, my dear—you look so dreadfully pale!" And finally, why do I, when hounds are *not* running, catch sharp hold of "Becky Sharp's" head, and lark that clever animal over every conceivable thing, making her toss her head about with such strange treatment, and going the right way to make her as irritable as myself?

Why do I do all these extraordinary things? My heart answers for me—Blanche! Blanche! The facts of my case are these: I came back from a longish tour abroad about three months ago, and, on my return, found Blanche, whom I had known all my life,

as affectionate as ever, seemingly; but, alas! just at that time there comes down to Oak-over Cottage (a snug hunting-box in the neighbourhood) a new tenant in the shape of a "Captain Cutway"—a dashing cavalier just sold out of the Queen's Roans, bringing with him a nice lot of horses, and giving out that, if he likes the country, he will either take the cottage on for some years, or take a larger place in the neighbourhood. Well, this is all very pleasant; the captain seems a good sort of fellow, has a capital cook and undeniable drinks, and is altogether an acquisition to the county; but, confound him! he has not been here very long, before he is as thick as thieves at the Mulberries—old General Dashwood's place—the father of my Blanche. I happened to be there the first time he dined with the general. It was only a family party—Blanche, her companion, Cutway, and myself, and, of course, the general. He took Blanche in to dinner, and monopolized

the whole of the conversation. I could not get a word in. After dinner, just the same. He quite ignored *me*, and fairly collared the general. The latter, by the way, had been formerly in the captain's old regiment—the Roans.

The old chief seemed quite charmed with his new neighbour. When Cutway was taking leave, he says, shaking him cordially by the hand, "You're not far off, Captain Cutway, you know; you'll always find me at home on Sunday. Luncheon, and a cigar afterwards, eh! And when the frost comes, and you can't hunt, if you don't run up to town, my daughter and I will always be pleased to see you."

"Many thanks," says the captain. "Depend upon it, I'll take you at your word, general."

This he says with a grin at Blanche, that makes me very angry. After he is gone, Blanche exclaims, "What a nice man!"

"*Such* a knowledge of the world," says Miss Budder, her companion or sheep dog. "Seems a very good, pleasant fellow," echoes the general.

I am quite glad when my dogcart is announced, and I drive home a great pace, anything but pleased with the new neighbour.

A few nights afterwards is the Honourable Mrs. Clinker's ball. There is this gay captain as impudent as ever; twirling his moustache, showing his teeth, and chattering like a magpie.

How I begin to detest him! Blanche seems much taken with him; and he not only dances three round dances and a quadrille with her in the course of the night, but takes her down to supper as well. I have not a chance, evidently.

At last, when I do have my one dance with her, I feel so sulky that I can scarcely speak to her, much to her surprise. She, like my mother, says she thinks I must be "ill."

Ill, indeed; enough to make a fellow ill, I think to myself. After our dance, she gives me a saucy nod every time we pass each other. How pretty she looks! I *must* say "good night" to her, and make friends; and, as I think this, as good luck would have it, I heard her ask Captain Cutway, who was having his last dance with her, to go and see after papa, as the carriage is waiting. Off he goes on his errand, so I take his place, and nicely I am teased for my pains. "What not gone yet, Johnnie?" says Blanche: "I thought you were so disgusted with everything, you had gone long ago. You've scarcely said a word to me all the evening, and never even asked me to dance until I had my card quite full; and I wanted to talk to you *so much*, too. I wanted to ask you how "Becky Sharp" was, and what coloured jacket you are going to wear in this wonderful steeplechase. You know I am coming to see you win."

"Coming to see Captain Cutway win, you mean, Blanche," I retorted, in my grandest manner.

"Ah," says that young lady, with a joyous little laugh, "I see now what's the matter with you—you're jealous of the captain, are you?—was he jealous, then, poor boy?"

"Oh, Blanche, *how* unkind you are," I blurted out, and was just going to out with it, and tell her the whole truth, when a horrid voice startled both of us—

"*Here* they are, general! Where *have* you been, Miss Dashwood! The general and I have been looking everywhere for you."

It is Cutway! What a humbug the fellow is! We have been sitting down close by the ball-room door—in fact, just where he left Blanche when I came up.

"Now, Blanchey, get your cloak on my dear," says the old general; "the horses will be getting cold."

So off Blanche goes on my arm, to the

cloak-room, the general and Cutway following. When she comes out again, wrapped up for her journey home, Cutway manages to shove his arm forward, and takes her to the carriage. In she gets, followed by the general, whom the captain helps in, in quite a son-in-law way; and the old general requires a little help to night, for he is rather unsteady on his pins. "Good night, Johnnie!" says Blanche, leaning forward in the carriage, and waving her hand to me. Cutway has got hold of the carriage-door, and monopolizes them completely, so I can't shake hands; and, just as the carriage is about to drive off, his hoarse voice—hoarser than usual, from the goodly quantity of Mrs. Clinker's not very first-rate champagne he has taken—shouts out, with much unnecessary *empressement* and a squeeze of her white-gloved little hand, "Good-bye, Miss Dashwood, *good-bye!* The next time you see me it will be winning this big steeplechase in a canter. Mind you back

me, to win a fortune in gloves." Off they go; and he turns round—"Halloo, old fellow! not gone yet, eh? Come and have a glass of sherry before we depart. Good ball, hasn't it been? *What* a jolly girl that Blanchey Dashwood is, isn't she?"

"*Blanchey*" indeed! think I; talking of her as if he was the general himself. I decline his glass of sherry, and bid him good night, and go in search of my hostess to wish her the same; and ten minutes more sees me driving home through the slushy lanes, in the silence of the dark night, or rather morning, for it is getting on for five o'clock. Twenty minutes more sees me to the house, and, yawning all the way up stairs, I go to bed, and soon am in the land of dreams. And, yes, I think Mrs. Clinker's champagne must certainly be very bad; for, first, I dreamt that, just as I was winning the hunt steeplechase in a canter, hands down, Blanche suddenly appears, and, shying

a knock-'em-down stick at me, knocks me off my horse. And next, I dreamt that I was in a church, looking on at Cutway's marriage to Blanche Dashwood, and the parson was saying to Blanche, "Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband," when—bang !—smash !—"the Prussians, by Jove !"—and, waking up with a start, I am overjoyed to find that the "Battle of Dorking" has *not* come off this time, and it is only the butler, who has overturned my bath with a crash, and is now pouring in the icy-cold water, which is to freshen me up for another day.

Three days later arrives Cousin Charlie, the giver of the lecture, the reasons for which have just been related.

Charlie, who is up to anything, from playing a fantasia of Thalberg's to making a book on the Two Thousand, has come down here kindly to put me in the way of things for the forthcoming hunt steeplechase, for which I

have entered my mare, "Becky Sharp." It is *the* great event of the year in the county. Every one goes, ladies and all; and it is followed by a ball, which makes it still more popular with the fair sex. There are other races, of course, the same day, but they are of very minor importance.

The hunt cup has the usual conditions of such races attached to it. "Gentlemen riders," of course. The stakes are 15 sovs. each, five forfeit, and 200 sovs. added; and the distance about four miles of a fair hunting country, with an artificial water-jump just in front of the stand.

I could not have a better mentor for the forthcoming tournament than the bold Charlie; for he has won more than one regimental steeplechase, to say nothing of others at regular cross-country meetings.

The morning after his arrival we sally forth, after breakfast, *en route* for "Becky Sharp's" abode, having, first of all, got under

weigh a couple of large cigars, the produce of Charlie's well-filled case.

"Good smoke, ain't they?" remarks that extravagant plunger. "I bought five hundred of 'em the other day, and they *only* stand me in four guineas a pound."

When we reach the stables, we find the great Mr. Twister, my stud-groom, waiting for us outside, straw in mouth, of course, and tapping his neat blucher boots with a small ash plant he carries.

"Mornin', gen'lemen. Glad to see you lookin' so well, capt'in," is his greeting, as he takes the key of "Becky's" box out of his breeches-pocket, preparatory to letting us in for the inspection of that distinguished animal.

But a word about Mr. Twister, who is a very great man in his own estimation, and that of his fellow-servants and companions generally. Indeed, from the awe with which one and all of them seem to feel for him, I

fancy that in their eyes he is a sort of Bismarck or Von Moltke. He began life as a Newmarket boy; but, being rather too fond of beef and beer, and being a very impudent dog besides, he did not get on very well at the head-quarters of the Turf; and one fine day Mr. Sam Welter, the well-known trainer, to whom he was apprenticed, and who at that period had the first favourite for the Derby in his stable, having caught his young friend in close confab with a well-known scamp of a tout, who was evidently after no good with the lad, took the law into his own hands, and administered such a licking, with a ground-ash stick, to Master Twister as thoroughly disgusted that young gentleman with the Turf and everything connected with it for some time afterwards; so shortly afterwards he took French leave, as the saying is, and took himself off from the Turf metropolis.

He next appeared upon the scene as groom

MY SWELL GROOM Mr TWISTER

to a young swell who had just left Oxford, and who was going the pace as hard as ever he could. So good did he make it, that he brought himself to a standstill in rather less than three years, and a very pleasant three years I have no doubt he had, and Mr. Twister, too. Indeed, that worthy, on referring to his late master, would say, with much feeling, "Well, of all the free-handed, liberal gents as hever I set eyes on—and I've seen a many, mind you—I *never* came across sech an out-an-outer as 'im, 'daggered' if hever I did." Of course, at the end of three years, Mr Twister had to look out for himself again.

The next thing that was seen of him was riding a steeplechase at Monaco, in the colours of that well-known continental sportsman, Count Alphonse de Leduc, who employed him as private trainer and occasional jockey, a post for which he was well fitted, for he had learnt quite enough at Newmarket

to know how to make such middling brutes as the Count possessed fit to go ; and, to do him justice, he could ride a good one, quite like a "center" (*i.e.* Centaur), as he himself would say.

However, here again the pace was too good to last. One fresh spring morning the Count was found by his valet with a fearful gash across his throat, and on his gorgeously appointed dressing-table was a bloody razor ; and it was too evident, by the tracks of blood from the table to the bed, that the unfortunate man had coolly undressed, gone to the looking-glass, cut his throat, walked to his bed, and there calmly bled to death.

Mr. Twister was again a free man.

Having saved a little money, he could afford to wait a bit. I happened to see his advertisement in the *Field*, and, after some correspondence, closed with him ; and, if I were not rather afraid of him, should say he suited me, to use a slang expression,

"down to the ground." He is always "hairin' his French," as he calls it, and is always bringing up the Count's name when I venture to give my opinion on anything connected with his department. "When I trained for the Count," he always begins—the Count's stud, as I have been told, having consisted of five or six weeds, that would scarce have paid for their hay and corn in England.

And now for "Becky Sharp."

"Take her clothes off, Jim," says Twister, as we enter the box, to the attendant helper.

"Becky Sharp," by "Swindler" out of a hunting mare, is a long, lathy, dark chestnut mare, with a white star on her forehead, and not another speck about her.

"Pretty fit, I *think* you'll say, capt'in," says Twister, as, leaning against the wall in an easy attitude, he scans the mare very complacently.

And Twister is right, she *does* look fit.

Her dark coat shines like satin; and as she puts her ears back, and lunges out gently with one of her hind legs, every muscle stands out in bold relief; and I think, if even the bold Dick Turpin were here, and could set eyes on her, *he* would think her worthy of carrying him in a ride for life or death.

CHAPTER II.

"Not *quite* class enough to win the 'Liverpool," capt'in, but varry near, sir—varry near," says Twister, as he passes his hand caressingly along "Becky Sharp's" hard and shining neck. "'Owever," he continues, "she's more than class enough to win this 'ere steeplechase, and 'arf a dozen sich the same day; and I tell Mister John that if he *honly* keeps 'isself quiet on her, and doesn't let her 'ave 'er 'ead until three-quarter of a mile from 'ome, when it comes to racing, there's not one of the others will be able to live with 'er. Lor' bless you! Capt'in Moore, she can go just as fast as you can clap your 'ands together. You must ride her to-morrow yourself, sir, and then

you can judge for yourself what she's made of."

"Certainly," Charlie says, "the mare looks uncommon like business; and, I should say, must have a rare chance of pulling this affair off, though I have seen none of the other intended runners."

"I 'ave though," says Mr. Twister, "seen 'em hall; and though all the '*Hoi polloi*,' as the hancients call 'em, about 'ere think 'Capt'in Cutway's 'oss is the one to put their pieces on,' the honly one—the *honly* one, as I'm afraid on—is "La Perichôle," a mare of Mr. Becher's—him as lives at Shenstone, you know, sir. I've seen her out 'unting, with Mr. Becher on her, several times, but I've never seen her jump anything; for Mr. B., though I'm hinformed he's a rare good judge of 'oss-flesh, never rides any, and Joe Blackbird, 'is 'ead man, is one of the most misteerous and deepest cards ever I conversed with. Nothing to be got out of *him*. 'Ow-

ever, I 'ear, on very good authority, that 'Mr. George,' the well-known gentleman rider, will steer the mare. If this is so, why, Mr. John will have to look to hisself, for it is quite sevin pounds to the good for any horse to 'ave such an A 1 pilot as Mr. George."

"Yes, by jingo!" says Charlie, "George is the boy to shove 'em along."

"I hope, for your sake, he'll break his mount's back, or his own, the first fence, Master Johnnie."

Hang this Mr. George! I think to myself; what business have such swell riders to come down and put themselves against men who, good across country as they may be, yet have never ridden a race in their lives? I only hope, as Charlie says, he may come to awful grief the very first fence.

At last the important day arrives; "Becky Sharp" is as fine as a star under Mr. Twister's training; and, as for myself, I never felt so fresh in my life, for Charlie has made me

"knock off my 'baccy," as he calls it, sent me to bed early every night, and looked on at my gallops on "Becky" every day; so, altogether, after all the combined advice and encouragement of him and Mr. Twister, I feel remarkably confident of my prowess.

I come down to breakfast on the important day, which is to "make" or to "mar" me, feeling rather seedy, for I have not been blessed with too much sleep in the course of the night. My mother and Charlie have already begun. Notwithstanding their combined entreaties, I make an indifferent feed of it; and I envy Charlie, who has cleared off no end of devilled kidneys, and is now going in for potted char, ham, oatcake, and marmalade, as if he had had nothing to eat for a week. I don't feel properly wound up until I have taken the plunger's advice, and drunk a glass of curaçoa and brandy—not to say two. "Nothing like it, old man," says Charlie, helping himself to the same seductive mixture.

"Adieu," to my mother, and then off we start in my phaeton for the scene of action.

The day is very bright and fresh, and there having been a slight frost in the night, the air is keen and exhilarating; indeed, my spirits rise to the occasion, and I feel as if I could ride at anything, or with anybody—even the great Mr. George himself. Even the horses shake their heads, and step along as if they enjoyed the fun.

"Mornin', sir; mornin', capt'in." says a jolly voice, the owner of which, cantering along the grass at the side of the road, has overtaken us. It is Dick Whelby, jolliest and most sporting of farmers. "Riding over to see Mister John win, capt'in? I see "Becky" pass our house this morning, and precious well she looked, too. My missis runned out, and had a look too; she'll be quite off her head, Mister John, if you win the cup, and on tittups." Dick, his cheery red face

beaming with broad grins and good humour generally.

Here's Doctor Mackintosh bowling along in his half-gig, half-dogcart, accompanied, as usual, by his man, in the seediest of hats and coats. The worthy doctor generally manages, I notice, to steal a few hours from his numerous patients when there is anything in the way of sport going forward. Next we overtake a dingy-looking brougham, drawn along by a Roman-nosed, flea-bitten old grey—Mrs. Rammaquin's, surely? Sure enough it is; and that old cat, Mother Rammaquin herself, is inside, for she pops her wizen old head out of the window as we pass, and, as she sees me, nods like a Chinese mandarin. I see her pretty, timid little daughter along with her. Her artful old mother makes a dead set at me always; for what a catch it would be for darling Lucy, she no doubt thinks to herself.

They do say she bullies the said Lucy awfully. She would like to pull up now and

talk, if I gave her the chance, which I don't —"not if I know it."

Now we pass Shenstone Priory, Mr. Becher's place, and, as I live, the owner of "La Perichôle" is just turning out of his lodge gates as we pass by. He waves his whip to me; and I see a sporting-looking man with him in his well-appointed dogcart. Charlie spots him directly.

"By Jove! that's the great Mr. George," says he; "that's the fellow you'll have to keep your eye on to day, old boy."

Here we are at Bedbury. That stupidest of towns is all alive O! Carriages, gigs, dogcarts, and nondescript vehicles of all sorts crowd the principal street. Men on horses, men on foot, card sellers and sharpers, and every sort of blackguard, all going to the same destination. Another mile and we reach the course.

Jolt, jostle, jig-jog we go over the uneven ground, and at last take up our position by the

ropes. A dozen cads descend upon us to help take the horses out, and turn the carriage round.

As I look about me, I see that close by is General Dashwood's carriage, containing the old soldier himself, his fair daughter, and her faithful sheep-dog. They are placed immediately opposite the artificial water-jump, so they ought to see plenty of fun.

Just at this moment up comes Twister, big with importance. "Our mare's over there," says he, pointing to the other end of the field, "and I've sent Tom with your dressing things to the room in the stand."

"All right," I reply, "I'll join you directly;" and off I go to pay my respects to the Dashwoods' carriage. I am very graciously received there, and Blanche blows me up sky-high for never having been near her since the Ball.

"I've a good mind not to speak to you all day, sir," says that lively young person. "But, Johnnie, how horrid, and large, and

nasty this brook looks!—it looks like a lot of mud and straw and water, all mashed up together. And I have seen 'Becky,' and how nice and pretty she looks; and Johnnie, let me tell you, sir, I've backed you for no end of gloves, so you really must win; and look what I've brought you to pin in your jacket —a little, tiny bunch of purple and white violets. Isn't it a pretty attention on my part?—it's more than you deserve, sir. Will you wear them, Johnnie?"

"*Wear* them, Blanche!" I exclaim. "Oh, how kind of you!" I forgive her everything from that moment, and am in the seventh heaven of delight. I don't care a button for *anyone* now. "But time flies. I must be off; so, good-bye, for the present, Blanche."

"Luncheon will be ready for you after the big race, remember," says the general. And as I turn away, I really think Blanche looks a little pale and anxious.

Now for "Becky." I find her walking about looking very smart in her brand-new purple and white clothing (my colours), surrounded by a host of my farmer friends, headed by old Ben Jovey, the farmer who bred her and sold her to me. Old Ben is very red in the face, and, I think, has already had several glasses of brandy and "warrer," as he calls it. "I've got my fi'-pun' note on, Master John," says he; "I hope you'll pull it off, sir. The mare looks uncommon; *that* she do."

"Well, Mr. Jovey, if I did'nt know 'ow to turn out an 'oss for sech a game as this, I did ought to be ashamed of myself," remarks Mr. Twister, eyeing old Ben with much contempt.

"Becky Sharp" herself takes things with the greatest indifference, staring about her with that wild eye of hers, as if she had been used to the game all her life.

But, hark! Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle: there's the bell for the first race.

"Come on," says Charlie, collaring my

arm; and off we go to the stand, to see what's going on. My own affair is the third on the card, so there is heaps of time to look about one.

A "selling handicap steeplechase" this is, of 40 sovs., only three runners, and here they come—and, "my eye," precious groggy-looking runners they are. Mr. Abram's, "The Kinchin," is favourite—a pretty hot one seemingly, but, as far as looks go, there's not much to choose between the three. Tinkle goes the bell; they are off the first attempt, the redoubtable "Kinchin" shuffling along the last of the trio. They only go once round, so have only two miles to do; and now they come to the water jump. "Hoosh!" over they go, altogether. The "Kinchin" gives a decided peck on landing, though, which his blackguard-looking jockey reminds him of by giving him a savage wrench of his mouth, and a cut over his head with his whip. Two more fences well over, and then "The

Kinchin" suddenly drops back. "And yet he don't look beat either," says Charlie, who has his glasses up.

"Why, what the blank's he a-doin' on?" shouts a burly ruffian at my elbow. "There's that blanky feller a-pullin' of the blanky 'orse a'ready; and there, I've took ten blanky suv'rins to height about 'im;" and, sure enough, his money looks anything but safe, for a regular roar goes up from the stand as the three horses come up to the final hurdle. It is plainly a *bonâ fide* case of Captain Armstrong, for it is very evident "The Kinchin," bad as he is, is far the best of the lot, and could win anyhow, if his jockey chose. But Mr. Sloper's "Light of Other Days" wins in a canter, cooked as he is; whilst the villainous-looking rider of "The Kinchin" makes a show of a finish with the other brute, amidst a regular howl from his infuriated backers. He makes a straight run of it into the inclosed place, knowing what he may expect if

he is caught, for the enraged populace would murder him, then and there, if they could.

However, under the circumstances, he knows exactly what to do, and he and the owner of "The Kinchin"—a Jew publican, hailing from the Haymarket—will take their departure quietly, whilst the next race is going on.

"Come on, old chap, and get your togs on," says Charlie, "for the next race, they say will be a 'walk over,' and there won't be much time afterwards."

So off I go ; and, having duly dressed and weighed, don my great coat, and wait for *the* important event of the day.

CHAPTER III.

"Who's that young chap?" I overhear a horsey-looking customer, in a heavy white great coat and a blue bird's-eye tie (the latter article showing off the brilliant crimson colour of his countenance to much advantage), ask his friend. "I niver see 'im afore to my knowledge. Can he ride any?"

I *try* to look as if it was anything but my first appearance in silk; but I fear the attempt is rather a failure. "Hang it; I wish I hadn't smoked those two cigars last night," I think to myself. I wonder if Charlie has got a flask in his pocket; I feel as if I should like some jumping powder. Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, goes the bell again close by. It is the second race; and Charlie

was right when he prognosticated a walk over. The dreaded Mr. George rides him, too. Here he comes, and very business-like that gentleman looks—a short stumpy man, with reddish hair and a pair of twinkling eyes that seem to take in everything in one comprehensive glance. Need I say he sports a most elaborate white tie, wears undeniable boots and breeches, and is altogether the perfect model of a gentleman rider.

He just trots his horse gently down the course to beyond the gorse-topped hurdles, and then, turning sharp round, sets him going, and jumps them in his stride, cantering home again, rising in his stirrups and patting his horse's neck, in all the pride of masterly horsemanship. I think there is no finer sight in this world than to see a real good horse striding along in his canter, with a *horseman* on his back, the pair seeming made for each other. One can almost fancy the quadruped saying, as he goes sweeping

gracefully by, "I am going this pace merely for my own amusement, gentlemen. I *like* it. By-and-bye you shall see how I really *can* go when I mean business." But to return to our story: Mr. George having finished his walk over, the fun of the fair is about to commence.

"Halloo, Temple!" says a voice behind me. Turning round, I behold the great Cutway. He, like myself, is ready dressed for the fray, his bright jacket being concealed beneath a huge rough coat, which reaches down to his heels. "How do you feel, my boy? They are making my nag a favourite over yonder, they tell me," says he, pointing, as he speaks, to Tattersall's ring. "You know your mare's a good 'un, Temple," he goes on; "but not quite enough of her, I don't *think*, for this journey. I've the measure of all the others, more or less, and I don't think, I don't really think, between you and me and the post, that it is six to four against my horse."

I notice Charlie, who has come, and has been listening to all this, prick up his ears, and when Cutway has had his say, begins very quietly, "I want to back my cousin's mare for a trifle, old fellow. Do you feel inclined to lay me the odds?"

"Yes, I will, old man," rejoins the ex-plunger, pulling out an elaborate betting-book, "with pleasure. I don't mind laying you eight *ponies*, or fifties, which ever you fancy."

"What say you to hundreds?" says Charlie.

"Very well, I'm equally agreeable," he replies, evidently thinking it real good business. "Eight hundred to a hundred," he mutters, as he puts it down. "Now, Temple, don't you want to back your mount?" he goes on, turning to me. "I'll lay you the same odds to fifty, if you like."

I feel rather "cock-a-hoop" for a moment at seeing such a clever fellow as Charlie

backing me; so I close with his offer, and immediately afterwards think what an ass I am, as Cutway shuts his book up with a slap of satisfaction, as if the money was already in his pocket. He then swaggers off, to put another *century* on his own horse, as he says.

"By Jove! Johnnie," says Charlie, looking after him, "that fellow will look blue before the day's over, you see if he doesn't. Halloo!" he exclaims, "they are putting the numbers up;" and, sure enough, up they go, with a slap, to the top of the telegraph-board.

Nine runners instead of the expected baker's dozen. All the better for me, I think to myself. Let us see who they are.

1. Mr. Becher's "La Perichôle" (scarlet and white chevrons). *Mr. George.*
2. Captain Cutway's "Lord Lovel" (white, yellow belt and cap). *Owner.*
3. Mr. Martin's "Sir Harry" (rose). *Owner.*
4. Captain Healey's "Lady Jane" (brown and blue cap). *Captain Hounslow.*
5. Mr. Temple's "Becky Sharp" (purple, white belt and cap). *Owner.*

Unhappy thought! No. 5 am I? Hope I shan't be No. 5 at the finish.

6. Mr. Greene's "The Farmer" (mauve, black cap). *Owner.*
7. Mr. de Boote's "Sir Roger de Coverley" (blue). *Owner.*
8. Captain Scroggin's "Betsy Baker" (orange, blue cap). *Captain Jones.*
9. Mr. Muffyn's "Jam Tart" (green, black belt and cap). *Owner.*

"Now then, let's be off, and get to the mare," says Charlie, taking my arm. "There's George going to get up already." We hurry off to find "Becky."

"There she is, sir," says an excited farmer, evidently one of my backers, pointing to a small crowd not fifty yards off on the course. Twister has already adjusted the girths, and is giving "Becky" the final polish as we come up, amidst a buzz of admiration from a numerous bevy of acquaintances.

"Now then, Johnnie, time's up. Off with your wrap-rascal," exclaims Charlie. "By jingo! though," he adds, with a grin, "we must pin that 'ere bunch of violets in your

jacket first; it would never do to go without them, eh?" He accordingly suits the action to the word, and pins them in for me.

"I wonder what gal guv' 'im that booky?" remarks an observant cad.

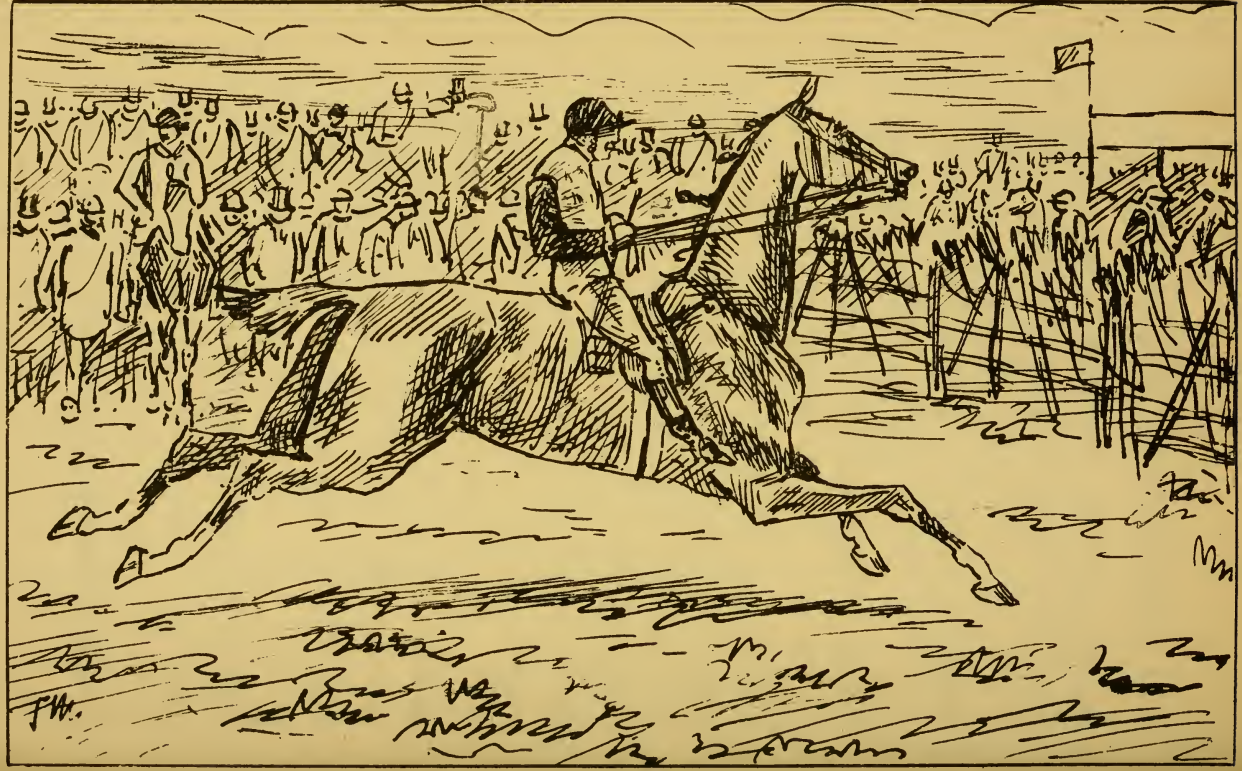
Off comes my great coat. Another second, and I am in the saddle.

"By Jove!" says Charlie patting the mare's neck as we move off, "the pair of you look uncommon. I shall be off, and put a bit more on, on my own account. Twister, mind and see him safe to the start, will you? *Bon voyage*, Johnnie," says he, shaking me by the hand; and off he goes into the ring.

We walk quietly pass the stand, Twister marching along at "Becky's" head, big with importance. What a row the "Genii of the Ring" are making!

"'Ere's two to one on the field for the 'unt cup," shouts one, at the top of his very powerful voice.

"Four to one bar one," bellows another.



"HOW MUCH AGAINST LA PERICHOLE

"I am very *anxious* to bet on the field for this race," shouts a good-looking man, with a pair of wild-looking eyes and a pointed moustache, flourishing his betting-book as he speaks. This is Mr. Charlie Nutt, the well-known leviathan bookmaker.

Now a quiet old country gentleman is considerably astonished by being pulled short up by a dusty-faced, dirty-fingered betting man, with the stentorian inquiry of, "Wot do you want to do now?" On due consideration the old gentleman is of opinion that the sooner he is safe in his own carriage the better, and takes himself off as soon as possible.

"Hi, hi, hi, !" "Becky" pricks her ears. "Make way there !"

It is "Mr. George," taking his preliminary canter, "La Perichôle" going like a steam-engine. Then follows a shout of laughter from the crowd. The cause of it is Mr. Greene's horse, "The Farmer," who declines

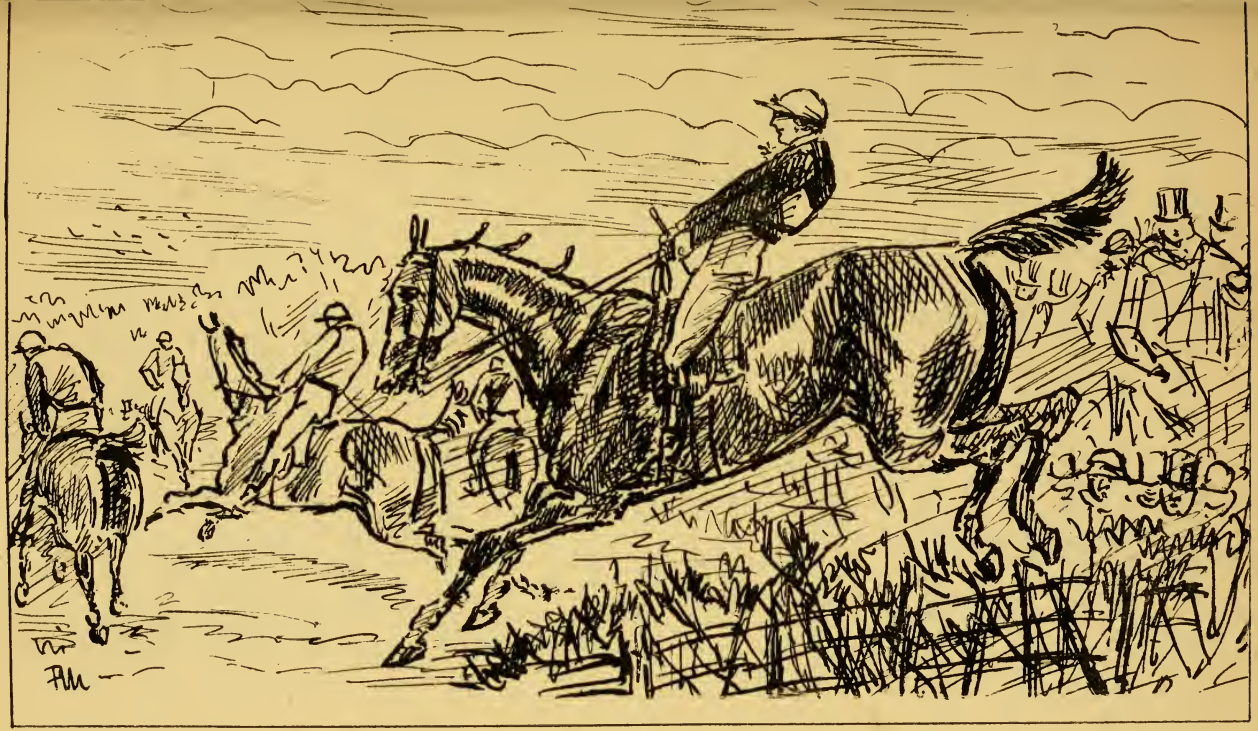
to jump the hurdles at any price. He is amusing himself by shaking his head and turning round and round like a teetotum, Mr. Greene the while looking most supremely unhappy.

"He wants to go 'ome to the ploo'," shouts a rustic Joe Miller, amidst a roar of laughter from the company.

Just then a farmer comes up, armed with a hunting-whip, and giving the brute a tremendous cut behind, sends him over the hurdle as if he was shot, and away the other side, Mr. Greene having his reins all loose, and one foot out of his stirrup.

That performance over, Twister takes us down to about fifty yards from the hurdles, and turning round, away we go. No refuse about "Becky;" she jumps them like a cat, and we do our canter in fine style.

"That's the winner, for a crown," says a white-coated cattle-drover to his pal as we go by. I only hope he may be right. As we



"THE PRELIMINARY HURDLE"

go by the Dashwoods' carriage, I just catch a glimpse of Blanche, sitting on the box seat. She waves her handkerchief to me. I feel duly encouraged, and, by the time I pull up and join the other horses, am ready for any emergency.

"Now, sir, you're all behindhand," says the starter, as I pull up. "Please get in a line, gentlemen, and don't be in a hurry; you can't go until I drop my flag, you know."

I am on the outside, next to Mr. George, and we are in a beautiful line, like a squadron of cavalry. Twister, who has galloped up on my hack, has barely time to whisper a last word of advice in my ear, when down goes the flag, and we are off.

"Becky" gives my arms a good wrench at starting, but soon settles down quietly to her work. George makes the running, at a great pace, being several lengths in front of the rest of us We all get well over the first fence without a mistake, and away over the

large pasture beyond. The next is a teazer, rather—a wide ditch and bank with a rail on the top and a ditch the other side, and plough to land in.

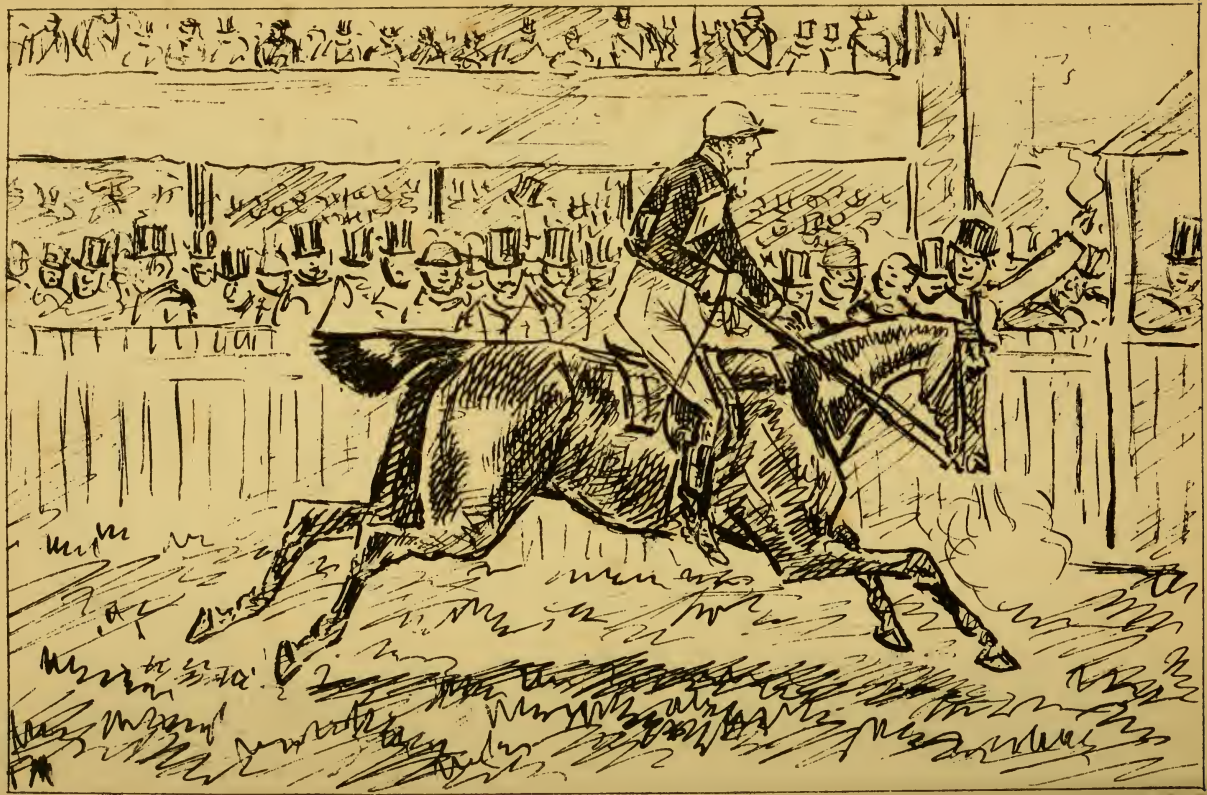
"Woh, you brute!" says a voice close to me. It is Mr. Greene again, whose lively horse, "The Farmer," is galloping with his great head in the air, as if he was star-gazing. I pull "Becky" back a little, and it is lucky I did, for "The Farmer," not rising an inch, takes the rail with his knees, and turns a complete somersault, rolling up Mr. Greene in a very uncomfortable way on the other side.

The rest of us get well over, Mr. George taking a pull at his horse over the plough, and looking all the while out of the corners of his eyes, as if he knew to an ounce how we were all going. The next four fences are all very easy, and we jump them without a mistake. Now we cross a wheat field, and over a small fence on to the racecourse, and then

comes the water-jump. It's a case of hardening hearts now in earnest. Cutway suddenly shoots to the front, a deuce of a pace, and soon is quite ten lengths in front of us. He is close to the jump now, and is just pulling his horse together for the effort when, "Yow, yow, yow!" out rushes an excited dog from the crowd, snapping at his horse's legs. "Lord Lovel" stops as if he were shot, nearly sending Cutway over his head. I am well out of his way, luckily. "Come along, 'Becky,' old girl!" I holloa, driving her at the brook. She pricks up her ears, and over we go, with lots to spare, amidst a shout from the crowd. George jumps it alongside of me. Only five of us in the hunt now, for, looking back, I see that besides Cutway's horse, "Sir Roger de Coverley" and "Betsy Baker" have both refused.

What's the betting *now*, I wonder? Scarcely anything of importance to jump, and "Becky" going as strong as a lion. Four

more fences well over, Mr. George and I both together, five lengths in front of our field. Now for some plough again, and a stiffish fence out of it, with a ditch and drop the other side. De Muffyns, passing us, sends his horse at it fifty miles an hour; but poor "Jam Tart," being blown, comes down a burster, breaking his own neck and considerably damaging his rider. I manage to pull "Becky" on one side in time, and only just. As it is, we land badly, and are very nearly down. Mr. George is still in front, and I am close to his heels; and—can it be? "La Perichôle" looks as if she had had enough of it. No more plough now, thank goodness. Crash we go through a small fence into a plantation, which we cross like a flash of lightning, and over a post and rail, and a drop the other side. George is obliged to wake his mare up, and gets over very slovenly. "Lady Jane" and "Sir Harry" cannon in the air, and roll over just behind us. Now for the tug of war! Only three



more fences. I let "Becky" out a bit; and, by Jove! George is obliged to ride "La Perichôle" to keep near me. She answers the call gamely, and is only just behind at the final hurdle. "Becky" has got lots of go in her, and jumps it quite clean; not so "La Perichôle," who smashes it like paper, and nearly comes down. "She's beat! She's beat!" roars an excited farmer. Whack, crack, smack! with a running accompaniment with the spurs. Mr. George is making his last effort. The good mare answers as well as she can; but it's no go. I shake "Becky Sharp" up, and leave her, as *Bell's Life* afterwards expressed it, just as if she was standing still. I look back, and see that George has given up all hopes of catching us, and has eased his mare. Another second or two, and I canter past the judge's box, easiest of winners, a good fifteen lengths in front of "La Perichôle."

Heavens! what a row the ring make as I pull up! and well they may, for they have

what is elegantly called "Skinned the Lamb!" that is to say, scarcely one of them has laid a farthing against "Becky," whilst a heap of money had gone on "La Perichôle" and "Lord Lovel."

"Well done, sir!" says Twister, meeting me as I walk back to weigh. He is quite pale with excitement. "I thought you'd do it, old lady," he goes on, addressing "Becky," and patting her neck; "but I certainly never did think it would be such an 'oller performance as this."

"Hooray! Three cheers for the young squire!" shouts out old purple-faced Jovey, former proprietor of "Becky," nearly wringing my hand off at the same time.

"Hooray!" echo a crowd of admiring countrymen.

"Well rode, Johnnie!" says Charlie, who has rushed out to meet me. "Page himself couldn't have ridden better. Why, the mare's not beat at all," he continues; "but 'La

Perichôle's' had her gruel, though. Look at her sides." And as she comes up close to me, I see the great crimson marks where the persuaders have been applied, whilst her drooping head and heaving frame show how done she is. "Becky," on the contrary, though she has had quite enough, is comparatively fresh, and has not a mark about her.

I look down at Blanche's violets, and they, too, are all right, and as fresh as when they were given me. Charlie and Twister escort me to the enclosure in triumph; and, having jumped off, and taken my saddle to the weighing-room, there soon comes forth to the expectant ears of my backers the welcome sound, "All right!"

Changing my things as quickly as I can, I walk off to lunch with the Dashwoods, having to run the gauntlet of lots of congratulating friends on the way, consequently I am some time getting there.

"Here the 'conquering hero' comes!"

exclaims Blanche, clapping her hands, as I walk up. "We're all so pleased you've won, Johnnie—aren't we, papa?"

"Well done, boy, well done!" says the jolly old general, shaking me heartily by the hand. "Never saw a thing better done in my life. You ought to be in the cavalry. As for my little Blanchey, there, you've quite turned her head with your horsemanship, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

Blanche blushes, and good old Miss Budder, her amiable sheepdog, looks at me with a sly twinkle of her eye that very much encourages me in my hopes for the future.

"Now, papa," says Blanche, "I am certain Johnnie must be nearly famished, and I am sure I am. Johnnie, sit next papa; and Captain Moore, I advise you to sit on the box."

The luncheon is speedily unpacked, and galantine, pigeon-pie, chicken, and tongue are soon being heavily laid siege to. I never

sat down to a luncheon with such an appetite in my life, and certainly never enjoyed that cheerful meal so much, for I felt I had really earned it well.

"Yes, I'll have one more glass of champagne, Johnnie," says the "Fayre One," in reply to my request, "if it's only to drink dear 'Becky Sharp's' health. When I saw you galloping up to this horrid, muddy jump, oh! I was *so* frightened; I thought you must break your neck; and do you know, sir, I saw my violets pinned in your jacket quite plainly when you came over, and I really believe it was wearing them made you jump so prettily."

Dear Blanche! I should like to drop my plate, and hug her on the spot.

"And that horrid Captain Cutway, Johnnie," she continues; "oh! how I laughed when his stupid horse refused. He got in such a rage, and tried to jump the brook standing, and they both tumbled head over

heels into the muddy water. You should have heard the people all laughing at him."

I really felt so happy when Blanche told me all this, that I quite pitied Cutway.

"Blanchey, are you ready to go home, my dear?" says the general. "If you are, we'll have the horses put to."

Blanche agrees, and tells me to be sure and be early at the ball. She also tells me that she won't give a dance away until she sees me. I never was so happy in my life ; everything is *couleur de rose.*

"Good-bye, Blanche, and *au revoir.* Good-bye, general ;" and, lighting a cigar, I walk off in search of Charlie. I soon succeed in finding him, and following the Dashwoods' example, we get our horses put to and are soon jolting away from the course, bound homewards.

"Well, Johnnie," says the plunger, as we trot along, "we haven't had a bad day of it altogether, have we? I landed nearly nine

hundred on your race, and a hundred on the next, when you were discoursing your ladye love. Cutway lost the best part of fifteen hundred, laying against you and backing himself. I wish you had seen him when he got out of the brook. You never saw a man in such a beastly mess in your life, and as savage as a bear. One of a lot of cads, who were chaffing him, caught it, for Cutway rushed at him, and gave him such a facer as he never had in his life before, and another chap such a cut over the face with his whip as didn't improve his beauty, I can tell you. I watched the 'Fayre Blanche,' too, when he came down, and she laughed immoderately. His chance is out there, depend upon it."

We reach home just as it is getting dark, much to the delight of my mother, who had fully expected that a broken neck would be the result of my steeplechase. Charlie and I accept her cup of tea, and while away the time by taking forty winks apiece until the

gong sounds, telling us to dress for dinner. How I pitch into it when it comes! I have been living very abstemiously lately to keep myself in proper trim for the race, so I make up for it now by taking a proper allowance of every thing both eatable and drinkable. After dinner, when my mother has retired upstairs, old Binns brings in a bottle of my late father's very best claret, warmed to perfection; and as it disappears under our combined attack, I begin to think to myself that if I don't win Blanche Dashwood to-night, I never shall. Charlie buzzes the bottle with an air of satisfaction, and I ring the bell for another. Binns appears as if by magic.

"I thought you'd want another bottle, Master John," says he, "so I had one all ready for you; and I will bring in some devilled biscuits directly, sir."

"Binns is a very sensible fellow," remarks Charlie, helping himself to a bumper.

Apropos of this claret, I remember once,

when I was a small boy, coming in to dessert one night, and there was a cousin of mine, Frank Leicester of the Rifle Brigade, staying in the house, one of the coolest fishes that ever lived.

Well, my father and he were sitting by the fire, over their wine, and my parent who was particular to the last degree about his drinks, and also about the temperature of his claret when put on the table, asked Frank how he liked that wine. Master Frank took up his glass, honoured it with a stare and a gulp, and a smack of his lips, and then said, in his drawling way, "Not bad clar't; doosid *good* indeed, but wants warming, don't it?" My father jumped up, and gave such a pull at the bell as frightened old Binns out of his life. He said afterwards he really thought my father was in a fit. "Here!" shouted my father, purple with indignation, "here! take this claret out, and, damme, *boil* it! D'ye hear me? *Boil* it for Captain Leicester!"

Binns stared, as well he might, and, taking up the claret-jug, was leaving the room, when the imperturbable Frank, who all this while had not moved a muscle of his countenance, called out, "Oh, by the way, Binns, while you *are* about it, just put in a lump or two of sugar and a little nutmeg; it is rather sour." This was too much for my poor governor; he got up, slammed the door, and retired to his snuggery, growling like a bear, and did not appear again the rest of the evening. Binns, I need scarcely say, did *not* boil the claret, but brought it in again, and Frank calmly finished it whilst he chatted to me.

Just as Charlie and I finish our second bottle, the faithful Binns put his head in, to know what time the carriage is to come round to take us to the ball. In a quarter of an hour's time, I tell him. Just one whitewash of sherry apiece, to wind up and set everything straight, and we retire to our rooms to put the finishing touches to our respective

toilets. "Good-bye, Johnnie!" says my mother, "Don't stay too late, for I'm sure you must be dreadfully tired;" and down-stairs we go, and jump into her comfortable carriage. Bang goes the door, and away we roll to Bedbury, where, in the Town Hall, is annually held what is called by the natives, "The Steeplechase Ball."

Notwithstanding Charlie's lively talk, it seems to me we are a dreadful long while getting there. At last we roll over the stones of the little town, and pull up in the rear of a long line of carriages; after about twenty minutes' slow going we reach the Town Hall, and jump out. We are in capital time, and they are just in the middle of the fourth dance, which happens to be the lively "L'Œil Crevé" quadrille, as we enter the ballroom. I look round in search of Blanche, but can't see her anywhere. As I gaze about, old Mrs. Mouser, who is sitting the opposite side of the room, with her three very plain

daughters, spots me with that hawk's eye of hers, and beckons playfully to me with her fan. Not *this* time old lady, I think to myself. A tap on the elbow rouses me presently, and, turning round, behold Blanche and her father. "We came just behind you," says she, "and you jumped out of your carriage in such a hurry, you did not see us, though I tapped at the window as loud as possible."

"Now, Blanche, you must give me this dance, a waltz—won't you?" says I.

"Well, I don't know that I will," replies this little bully. "However, as they are just beginning, and I may not get another partner directly, perhaps I had better say yes. Good-bye, papa! I shall be at the end of the room with Mrs. Bandoline when you want me."

Coote and Tinney's band strike up one of Gung'l's lovely waltzes and away we go. After that is over, I carry off Blanche to have some tea. She promises me two more

waltzes and a galop, and before five minutes are over has filled her card completely up with the names of her numerous admirers. She is such a pretty girl, and such a good dancer, that she is always in great request. But hark! they strike up the first bars of the "Lancers." Young Rasper rushes up to claim Blanche, so I betake myself to the doorway and look on, in company with a whole lot of others, all chattering like so many magpies.

"Halloo, Cutway!" says one, as the bold captain lounges up, still looking rather glum. "Why, I never expected to see you here to-night, after that mud bath you indulged in to-day. Weren't hurt, I hope?"

"Hurt! no!" growls Cutway. "I'll tell you what, if it had not been for that dog, I must have won, sir—I *must* have won! Doosed lucky for you, Temple, that brute making my horse refuse in that way; depend upon it, if he hadn't I should have been level with you at the last hurdle."

The "Lancers" finishing at this moment puts a stop to the conversation, and Cutway goes off; and by-and-bye I see him go and shake hands with Blanche. She has one dance disengaged, late on in the evening, so she gives it him; only one, thank goodness—quite enough for him, though, I think to myself. The next three dances I dance with other young ladies of my acquaintance, and then comes a galop with Blanche. After that is over, the supper-room is thrown open, and I ask Blanche to come down with me; she very graciously assents, as, she says, she thinks I ought to be made much of after my feat of winning the hunt cup. We go through the usual routine of chicken and tongue, champagne and seltzer. Just as she is putting on her gloves, she suddenly remembers she is engaged for the next dance to young Duffie, a gentleman, son of an enormously rich Brummagem manufacturer, and endowed with considerably more money than brains.

"Oh! he's *such* a stupid man, Johnnie!" she exclaims, "and *such* a bad dancer! What shall I do? How can I avoid him?"

"I'll tell you, Blanche. We'll go and sit in the tea-room; he'll never think of looking for you there."

"That will do capitally!" says she. "Let us be off now, or he will be coming in here after me."

Off we go, and find the room empty, except a waiter and a maid, who are conferring amiably together in a snug corner behind the tea-table.

"Well, Blanche," I begin, "are you not sorry poor Cutway did not win to-day?"

"Now, Johnnie, that is *too* bad of you. You know I wanted nobody to win but you; and even if I did not care about you yourself, I should not like to have seen 'Becky Sharp' beaten. Oh! I am so fond of her, dear old 'Becky'! I sometimes think, do you know, she ought

to have me for a mistress instead of you for a master."

"Ah, Blanche! dear Blanche!" I whisper, "won't you say you'll be 'Becky's' mistress for good and all? You don't know how much I love you—I do indeed! You have teased me dreadfully ever since I came back from abroad, and I did not know how much I loved you till then. Say, Blanche, yes, or no—will you be my wife?"

"Oh, you bad boy!" replies Blanche, looking down and blushing very prettily. 'What must I say to you? You seem to think, because you have won this horrid race, you are to have everything your own way."

"Oh, Blanche! please don't tease me. Am I to go abroad again, and leave you for ever? Don't be so cruel: tell me my fate. Do you love me?"

"Yes, dear," Blanche replies, her little white-gloved hand which is in mine giving me a squeeze. "I love you dearly, Johnnie,

and you have made me very happy, you bad young man! I could cry. Don't kiss me, sir!—Look! there's that horrid waiter laughing at us."

"You have made me so happy, Blanche! I may come over to-morrow morning and see the general—mayn't I?"

At this juncture, one of Blanche's unfortunate partners pokes his nose into the tea-room; several of them have been drawing for her, but he is the only hound who has not drawn blank.

"Been looking everywhere for you, Miss Dashwood. Our dance this time, I think;" and he carries her off. I rush off to find Charlie Moore; he is not dancing, luckily.

"Halloo! young man," says he, directly he sees me, "where have you been to, and what have you been a-doin' on? There's something up I can see by your face. Well, has the double event come off?"

"Come off! yes. I've won in a canter for

the second time to-day. I'm the happiest man in England, and I'm dreadfully thirsty; come and have some champagne."

Off we go; and after one more dance with Blanche, and a very tender "Good night!" Charlie and I take our departure; and I fear that my mother's carriage, by the time we get home, smells like a cigar-shop

The next day, directly after breakfast, I rode over to the Dashwoods', saw the general, who received his future son-in-law with open arms, and had a very delightful *tête-à-tête* with Blanche.

My story is finished. Three months afterwards, gentle reader, if you had cast your eye down the marriage column of the *Times*, you might have seen the following :—

"On the 17th June, at St. Anne's Church, Cackleton, by the Right Rev. the Bishop of Porchester (uncle of the bride), assisted by the Rev. Samuel Slowboy, M.A., JOHN GEORGE ARTHUR, only son of the late JOHN TEMPLE, Esq., of Ryslip House, Bedbury, Blankshire, to BLANCHE MAUD, only daughter of MAJOR-GENERAL DASHWOOD, C.B., of The Mulberries, near Bedbury."

Of course Charlie was my "best man" on the occasion, and a very good one he made. As we were discussing affairs a day or two before, he told me Cutway's horses were all up at Tattersall's to be sold on the following Monday. "He was very hard hit on the Two Thousand," says Charlie; and he continues, "I think I shall bid for the brown horse he rode in that steeplechase of yours."

To wind up: "Becky Sharp" is never going to be steeplechased again: she has become a perfect lady's horse, and in future is destined for the sole and entire use of the "Fayre One with ye Golden Locks."

WON BY A FLUKE.

"Now then, Jack, how much longer are you going to be? Do leave off whistling 'La Fille de Madame Angot,' and look sharp; I'm nearly famished. The fish is getting cold—kidneys too." The speaker, or rather shouter, Charlie Wemyss, captain in Her Majesty's 108th Dragoon Guards, has come to breakfast with his friend and relation, the Hon. Jack Latchford, and, as usual, has found that worthy snug in bed.

"Don't wait for me!" shouts back the honourable, who is dressing very leisurely in the adjoining room, whistling all the while

as loud as he can. "Don't wait for me; I'll be with you in a brace of shakes."

Charlie groans, and, once more taking up *Bell's Life*, awaits his lazy relation. That gentleman does not keep him long, for in two minutes he appears upon the scene in a free-and-easy sort of semi-Turkish costume —jacket and trousers composed of all the colours of the rainbow, slippers to match— unstudded as to his neck, and looking altogether thoroughly comfortable. "How are you, old man?" is his greeting. "Come on, let's set to, I'm awfully peckish." Charlie, nothing loth, sits himself down at the well-spread breakfast-table, and the two begin to peg away, in most workman-like style, at the devilled soles, etc.

The "Honourable Jack" is one of those rosy-looking, healthy men who *always* have an appetite, and *always* look fresh, no matter how many brandies-and-sodas and cigars they have consumed the night before. Jack

at this present moment is very hard up. He has just lost a cracker on the "Grand National," and the colt he has backed for the "Two Thousand" has gone clean to the bad, besides which he is very much in debt; yet, to look at the man, you would think he hadn't a care in the world. Behold him now, what an appetite he has! how steadily he is working away at the kidneys! The second son of Lord Coxcombe, that well-known patron of the Turf, devotedly addicted to all field sports—more particularly racing—to say nothing of other little expensive amusements, it is not to be wondered at that he finds it uncommonly difficult to make both ends meet at the end of the year. A glance round his sitting-room would alone give you an insight into his tastes and pursuits. His "crib," as he calls it, is situated, by the way, in a quiet little street out of St. James's Street. Divers fishing-rods and gun-cases, piled up in a corner, denote

that their owner may be seen at times scouring the moor or stubble, or walking along the banks of a stream, flogging the water sedulously in search of the lovely speckled trout or silvery salmon ; whilst, from divers hunting-whips and a couple of racing-saddles hung against the wall, we may infer that he sports in turn "the silk and the scarlet." The drama, too, evidently enjoys a share of his patronage, for on one side of the mantlepiece is a photograph of Mr. Sothern as "David Garrick," balanced on the other by a ditto of Mr. Toole in one of his well-known characters. Several portraits of past Derby winners, after "Harry Hall," and a series of hunting and steeplechase scenes adorn his walls. His library consists of a few odd volumes of the "Racing Calendar," "Sponge's Sporting Tour," one or two yellow-backed railway novels, and last month's "Baily," the rest of the room being filled up with the usual miscellaneous litter of a bachelor's apartment.

At last breakfast is over, and each, sousing himself into the depths of an armchair, proceeds to smoke—Charlie with a huge cigar, Jack with a meerschaum—"puff! puff! puff!" is the order of the day. Charlie is the first to open his mouth. "Have you heard anything from head-quarters this morning?" says he. "I see in the paper the 'King's' gone back in the betting a point or two. They seem to be backing 'Rasselas,' too, like steam, notwithstanding his weight. It's ridiculous. They think because he won the Derby last year he is to win this race with 9 st. 4 lbs. I don't see it; do you?" "No!" replied Jack, "'Rasselas' be blowed; don't believe he'll get a place even. By Jove! how riled my governor will be if our horse don't pull it off. I know he hasn't hedged a farthing of his money yet awhile, and I'm sure I haven't; more have you—have you?"

At this juncture a tap is heard at the door. "Come in!" shouts Jack, and enter James,

his well-drilled body-servant. "One of Mr. Napper's boys brought this note, sir." "All right, James, tell him to wait; I'll let him know if there's an answer directly." "Very good, sir," and exit James, closing the door behind him in a quiet way—peculiarly his own—that would make many a swell cracksman envious of him for life.

Jack tears the letter open in great haste, and proceeds to read. "Here's a pretty go!" he exclaims. "What the deuce is to be done? I don't understand it. Here, read it, Charlie and see what you can make of it;" and, so saying, he chucks the note over to him and stamps about the room.

"There's something wrong with 'King Pippin,' I'll bet a 'underd," remarks James to himself, in the room beneath; turning rather pale at the same time, for he has half a year's wages on him.

Let us peep over Charlie's shoulder as he reads—

"*Swettering Lodge, Epsom,*
"*Tuesday.*

"DEAR SIR,

"I send this by one of my lads, thinking it best not to telegraph. 'King Pippin,' after a gallop this morning, pulled up very lame. Several somebodies were about, so you won't be surprised if, in the course of the day, you find he has gone to 100 to 1 for the City and Suburban. Sir, *don't be afraid.* Take all the thousands to ten obtainable, and, if possible, come and see the horse to-morrow, when I will explain matters to you fully.

"I remain, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOSEPH NAPPER.

"*The Honble. John Latchford,*"

"Well, old boy, what do you think of that?" says Jack, as Charlie finishes his perusal. "I must light another cigar on top of it," answers his cousin. "It has quite knocked me out of time. By jingo! how savage your governor will be if there is anything really wrong." Charlie lights his cigar and takes up the letter once more.

"KING PIPPIN TAKING HIS MORNING GALLOP

There is a dead pause for two or three minutes. All of a sudden Charlie jumps up; "Look here, Jack, I see through it; I believe Joe knows what he is about better than any man in England. I don't believe there's anything really the matter, after all, with the 'King.' We'll do as he says, and take all the long odds we can get about him, and to-morrow we'll go down and see him." "Agreed!" exclaims Jack, "I'll write a note at once and say we'll be there." In five minutes the note is written; James again appears and disappears, and the Honourable Jack retires to his bedroom to don his every-day costume. And now let us leave the pair for the present.

As I have before mentioned, Jack is the second son of Viscount Coxcombe, and is the son of all others, after his father's own heart. The eldest son, the Hon. Eustace Latchford, is quite a different sort; Exeter Hall, playing the violoncello, and collecting old china being

his line of country. His lordship at this present moment is quite as hard up as the Honourable Jack, if not harder. Now just at this time he is the possessor of that good-looking four-year-old, "King Pippin," by "Richard I." out of "Appleblossom." "King Pippin," as all the world knows, ran fourth for the Derby last year, backed for a heap of money by his noble owner and his friends. Several young swells had failed to put in an appearance at Tattersall's on settling-day; several gallant young soldiers exchanged into regiments going to India, all owing to his majesty "King Pippin." To crown all, when they again backed him for his Leger, he fell lame a week before the race, and let the whole party in once more. Since then he had been allowed to be idle. However, he was entered for the City and Suburban, and got in with only 7 st. 4 lbs. to carry. He was once more put into training, and being roughed up one fine morning with

KING PIPPIN GONE TO 100 TO 1

JOHN THOMAS IS QUITE NONPLUSHED

one or two others, clearing the lot of them out very easily, they once more backed him to win a small fortune. Lord Coxcombe has backed him to win him £50,000. The Honourable Jack is on well also ; indeed, all the family, from his lordship down to his helpers in the stables, are behind the redoubtable "King Pippin." Even Lady Coxcombe's maid has a fiver on at 30 to 1, and has promised, should the good thing come off, to make John Thomas, her ladyship's tallest and best-looking footman, happy by endowing him with her hand and heart.

Judge, then, how they are all taken aback one morning when they see, in the betting quotations in the *Standard*, 100 to 1 against "King Pippin" *offered.* The establishment down in Hampshire is turned upside down. My lord is nearly frantic; all his money lost again, and no chance of getting any back. John Thomas, anathematizing the Turf and everything connected with it, proceeds to

vent his anger on Mary, his sweetheart, who weeps freely when she hears the "'orrid news." Quilter, the stud-groom—master of the horse he calls himself—takes a dogcart and drives furiously over to Winchester, there to soothe his ruffled feelings in cavendish and brandy-and-water; and as for poor Mons. Tricochet, the *chef*, he gives way to tears and absinthe in his private apartment, and that evening sends up the very worst dinner he has ever been known to since he has studied the noble art of gastronomy. It is not to be wondered at that next morning the Viscount Coxcombe woke up with a tremendous attack of gout.

The Honourable Jack, as has been seen, took matters much more quietly; as Charlie Wemyss advised, he drove his cab calmly down to Tattersall's and took all the thousands to ten he could lay his hands upon; his cousin betaking himself at the same time to another well-known club further east, and

doing the same. Bookmakers began to smell a rat, and before the evening the horse had come back to 33 to 1, taken freely.

Great was the mystery. "King Pippin's" backers, who numbered legion, couldn't make it out at all. Here at one moment the bookmakers were laying against the horse as if he were dead, the next he came back in the betting with a bound to a quarter of the price. The British public were completely puzzled. The faithful James, who always stood in a trifle with his master in any of his good things, was told to send £20 here and £10 there to all the different advertising firms in Scotland, in his own name, of course, giving them all a turn—little and big—as the Honourable Jack remarked.

James chuckled respectably to himself (he never indulged in anything so coarse as a laugh), when all the different vouchers from Edinburgh and Glasgow came pouring in, in return for his post-office orders. The next

morning, soon after nine o'clock, saw our two friends bowling along merrily in a fast-going hansom "*en route* for the palace of 'King Pippin,'" emitting perfect clouds of cigar-smoke as they spun along. After a pleasant three hours' drive on this bright spring morning, the trainer's snug ivy-covered house is reached, and there, waiting for them at the front door, is Joe Napper himself—"King Pippin's" trainer—Joe looking most uncommonly pleased with himself for some reason or another. He greets the two gentlemen with much cordiality as they alight from their hansom. Good-looking Mrs. Joe runs out too, to say "how d'ye do." The Honourable Jack is evidently a favourite with that lady, and great was the chaff between them. They go into the house, and after a brandy-and-soda all round, the two adjourn to the stables. "Let's go straight to the 'King,' Joe," says Jack; "we'll see the rubbish afterwards." His majesty's box is soon

reached, and Joe, taking a key from his pocket, unlocks the door and ushers the party in. "King Pippin" is a bright bay, with black points and a white star on his forehead—one of the long, low sort, looking all over like staying; indeed, as Joe Napper himself expresses it, "Lor' bless yer, he can stay as long as a lady in a bonnet shop." Altogether he is a real good-looking one, a little big, perhaps; but, then, he is not yet thoroughly wound up.

"The rogue's only had a walk this morning; have you, old chap?" says Joe patting the "King" on his quarter, which the horse resents by playfully turning round and pretending to bite him. Jack and his cousin are silent; the boy is there, and they well know Joe won't let out stable secrets until they are alone in the house. Their visit to "King Pippin" being over, they next make an inspection of several other nags, the property of Lord Coxcombe, together with three or

four others the property of some one else, and wind up with some promising looking yearlings ; that over, they adjourn to the house, where a sumptuous lunch is in waiting for them, presided over by comely Mrs. Joe. Full justice having been done to it, Joe gives his "Missus," as he calls her, a wink ; and Mrs. Joe, who is a rare hand at taking a hint, takes her departure. Cigars are produced, and then the trainer proceeds to tell his tale to anxious listeners.

It appeared that the "King" was having his usual long gallop the first thing the previous morning, when, on pulling up, it was discovered that he had twisted one of his plates, and walked a little lame in consequence. Joe, who was on his hack looking on, and who, as usual, was wide awake, proceeded to make a great fuss about the horse, walking him very slowly home, and stopping every now and then as if the "King" had broken down badly, as he well knew several touts

would be safe to be looking on, and in less than an hour it would be equally certain to be wired all over the place that "King Pippin" had broken down.

"He ain't been out at all to-day," says Joe, rubbing his hands; "but he will to-morrow, and if he don't do such a gallop as will bring him to 4 to 1 before the day's out, and frighten 'em all out of their lives, why, I'll eat him, that's all. Why, the horse is as sound as a bell. What a getting out there will be, to be sure. Ha! ha! ha!" Joe hugs himself at the very idea. "There's just a fortnight to wind him up in, and bar accident, he'll be as ripe as a peach on the day."

"Well done, Joe," say we. Fresh cigars are lit, and another short visit paid to "King Pippin," and then the hansom is ordered round; and bidding adieu to Joe and his wife, off Jack and Charlie go again to town, highly delighted with "King Pippin," Joe, themselves, and the world in general. Jack's

letter that evening to his noble "parient" speaks volumes:

"*Noodles,*
"*Wednesday.*

"My dear Father,

"Just come back from Joe's. 'King Pippin's' as well as ever he was in his life; to-morrow will be going again like great guns; the City and Sub. is a gift for him if he keeps well. Sorry to hear about the gout. Hope this will send it away. Love to my mother.

"Your affectionate son,
"John Latchford."

The great day at last arrives, and never was the Epsom Spring Meeting ushered in under better auspices. The morning broke light and clear, and there was every prospect of an enjoyable outing for the sporting Londoners.

"King Pippin" has been doing first-rate work the past fortnight, and is as fit as hands can make him. Lord Coxcombe and his friends fear nothing. As Joe Napper

predicted, the getting out of those who laid heavily against him on the strength of his supposed break-down was a caution. They were glad to back him at any price; consequently, only 2 to 1 is offered on the field, and "King Pippin" is a hot first favourite. "Rasselas" with all his weight is next, at 4 to 1.

Several minor races are run before the big event, and as the time draws nigh, and the "King" makes his appearance in the paddock, led by Joe himself, there is a perfect rush to look at him. He certainly looks fit to run for his life; and well may Lord Coxcombe be proud of him, as he and his son Jack superintend his toilet. Johnnie Prosper—"the Pocket Hercules," as he is called—stands by, ready to ride, and has been put on £500 to nothing if he wins; and, to all appearance, he is pretty pleased with his mount. Doffing his tiny greatcoat, he appears in a brand-new mauve jacket and white cap. A hoist from

Joe, and he is in the saddle in a second. My lord and party then leave the paddock, and make the best of their way to their private box in the Stand, which they reach just as the horses emerge on to the course, led by "Rasselas," with that celebrated horseman Tom Walloper in the saddle. Twenty-five of them walk past in Indian file, then, turning round, they take their canter. "King Pippin" looks and goes so well that at last 7 to 4 is the best offer on the field. Now they reach the post. Glasses are out in every direction.

"They're off!" "Hats off!" "No, they're not; false start;" and again the hubbub of many tongues goes on. "Hats off!" again. "No! another false start." "It's that brute Malplaquet won't join his horses, and is kicking like fun." All in line once more. "*Now* they're off, for a *pony!*" cries Jack. Right this time. Clang goes that dreadful bell. There is a dead silence until they are seen streaming round Tattenham Corner.

"Lord Coxcombe thumbs King Pepper with a

Mauve jacket is seen in the van. "Lord Coxcombe wins, for a *thoosand!*" bellows a great north-country bookmaker at the top of his stentorian voice.

On they come; whips and spurs hard at work. His lordship drops his glasses and bites his lip. Jack is wild with excitement. "Rasselas" is in front!—"Rasselas wins!" "No he don't!" Something in black and orange shoots out; its "North Star," a rank outsider. "King Pippin's" jockey makes a terrific effort. No go. "North Star" wins cleverly by half a length. There is no doubt about it. A tremendous cheer from the ring announces the defeat of the favourite. Jack turns visibly pale—his lordship green, Another moment, and up go the numbers, 22—7—1: "North Star" first, "King Pippin" second, and "Rasselas" third. Lord Coxcombe, thoroughly disgusted with the whole business, throws himself back in his chair; Jack grinds his teeth, and feels strongly inclined to hit

somebody. But, stay, there is surely some commotion in the ring below! Charlie looks out over the box. "By heavens!" he exclaims, "I believe there is an objection. Come on, Jack." And without more ado, he runs downstairs as hard as he can split, followed by Jack and his lordship. As they reach the weighing-room it is clear something out of the common is going on. They rush in. Sure enough, Joe Napper has objected to the winner on the ground that the jockey who rode him had carried 4 lbs. overweight, and had not declared it before the race. It is to go before the stewards directly. "Well done Joe!" say we. Half an hour afterwards those gentlemen met, and as a matter of course, disqualify "North Star" and declare "King Pippin" winner of the City and Suburban. Lord Coxcombe, Jack, Charlie Wemyss, and their friends have won a heap of money. Joe Napper, too, has won more than he ever won before in his life.

Depend upon it, Mrs. Joe will have something very handsome to remember this auspicious day by.

That "King Pippin" may win many more races for his noble owner is our cordial wish. But if he *does* win a big race again, as the Honourable Jack remarked, with a grin, let us hope it will not be by a *fluke*.

THREE DERBY WEEK SKETCHES.

I.

TAKEN AT ETON.

It is what is commonly called a "whole school-day" at Eton, and a very hot whole school-day it is. To be particular, it is the last Wednesday in May, consequently a week before the Derby. It is three o'clock school, and the middle division, fourth form, are, or at least are supposed to be, hard at work, up to their master, the Reverend Mr. Swack. About this period of his scholastic career, let us

remark, the lively Etonian is in the full bloom of impudence and mischief generally. This particular division manage to keep poor Mr. Swack in a constant state of excitement. Peeping into a very much knocked about and dog's-eared "Yonge's Horace," we discern on the fly-leaf the following inscription:—"Robert Lovel, Eton Coll., Bucks," Underneath, evidently by another's hand, is scrawled—"Commonly called 'Lord Lovel.'"

Let us see what the industrious Master Lovel is up to. On looking round the division, it would be hard to pick out a merrier-looking specimen of the Eton boy than "Lord Lovel," as he is pretty generally called. There is mischief in his curly hair, and any amount of cheek in his laughing blue eye. Mr. Horace, we have mentioned is in front of him on the desk, and Master Lovel's chimney-pot hat is on the form beside him; and, apparently, he is paying considerably more attention to the

latter than the former, for his hand is immersed in the hat, and his eye is watchfully fixed on Mr. Swack. That gentleman's spectacles being employed on the boy who is construing, the hand of "Lord Lovel" slowly emerges from the hat, holding a small piece of paper.

"*A beastly outsider*," he is heard to mutter, as he reads something on it. "*Go on, minimus.*"

The small boy next him, Browne minimus, takes his turn at the hat, and soon draws forth another piece of paper.

"Let's look," says Lovel. "'Sefton!' Oh, he won't win! Now it's my turn again."

His hand once more emerges from the hat. He is just unfolding the little piece of paper, when—

"Lovel, what are you doing there, sir?"

It is the voice of the much-enduring Mr. Swack, who, as Lovel expresses it afterwards, has "just nailed him on the post."

"What are you doing there? I *insist upon knowing!*"

"*Nothing*, sir," replies the guilty Lovel.

"*Nonsense*, sir. Bring that piece of paper to me instantly—*instantly*, do you hear, sir? And you have got something in your hat; bring that too."

Master Lovel, amidst a general titter, proceeds to obey orders very reluctantly. Mr. Swack glares fiercely round, while Lovel makes faces behind his back, to the great delight of the division.

"What's this!" says the master, unfolding one of the pieces of paper, and with difficulty reading the inscription on it. "What's the meaning of this? Sir Joseph, is it? What is it, sir? I *insist* upon knowing immediately. *Who is Sir Joseph*, and what do these pieces of paper mean? Cyprus, too, on this piece."

"Oh, Cyprus, sir," replies the scapegrace. "I thought everybody knew Cyprus was an

island in the Ægean Sea. Surely there's no harm in writing that, sir, on a piece of paper? Practising a little geography, sir."

The division shout with laughter.

"*Silence!*" roars the exasperated Mr. Swack, bounding up. "The whole division will write out a *Georgic*, and bring it to-morrow at *one!* Lovel, you are, without exception, *the* idlest boy in the whole of the division. I shall complain of you."

"*But, Sir,*" remonstrates Lovel.

"*Not another word,*" replies Mr. Swack. "I will leave the head master to find out what you mean by writing names on pieces of paper. I will not stand it any longer. Prepositor, take this to the head master."

At this juncture, Master Lovel, seeing that things begin to look serious, puts on a very penitent face, pretends to cry, confesses that it was a little Derby lottery he was engaged in, that he is very sorry, and will never do it again. The end of all which is, that

Mr. Swack, who is the kindest-hearted man in existence, lets the scapegrace off with—"*A hundred lines to-morrow at one, sir.*" He then makes a few remarks on the horrors of gambling, and winds up with a grim joke, in which the Isthmian games and the Derby are brought into play.

The division applauded the joke, and took the opportunity to stamp and laugh for fully five minutes.

Four o'clock strikes, and books are shut, and they are off like a shot. Master Lovel and Browne minimus adjourn to "Webber's" for a strawberry mess, and we regret to say that they had not been in that establishment five minutes before arrangements had been made for another lottery between the pair, to take place at five o'clock school. "Lord Lovel" goes off to his room, to write out part of his hundred lines for to-morrow; Browne minimus retires to his, to write down

once more the names of all the Derby horses on some more little pieces of paper.

There we will leave these young "vessels of wrath," trusting that when five o'clock school comes, and they are well into their lottery, the long suffering Mr. Swack will once more nail them both, and complain of them without mercy.

Since the above was written, we have heard from "Lord Lovel's" brother (a contemporary of our own) that his scamp of a minor brought off the lottery all right, and not only that, drew "Sir Joseph" in the "house sweep." We prophesy that he will be swished and tamed down before the end of the half.

II.

A PILLAR OF THE CHURCH.

AGAIN a week before the great event. Let us peep for a moment into the snug breakfast-room of the rectory house, Upton-cum-Mudbank. The rector and his wife have just finished their morning meal. The former, a hale-looking, ruddy-faced gentleman of fifty-five or thereabouts, has just wound up a remarkably good breakfast, according to custom, with a little bit of toast and marmalade, and is now deep in the columns of the *Times*. His spouse is perusing a letter from her boy at Eton, the principal theme of which is a demand for some more money, or, as he elegantly terms it, "tin." The rector is the first to break the silence.

"My dear," says he, "don't you think we ought soon to be thinking of running up to town, and seeing the Academy, and—

and Holman Hunt's new picture, and go to the opera—eh? It really is such *lovely* weather, it struck me we might be off on Monday, if you could get ready. What do *you* think, my dear?"

"My dear" smiles quietly to herself, for the fact is this speech of the reverend's is an annual, always in flower just at this time; in fact, she had been on the look out for it the last two mornings, and has for some time had everything ready for a start at short notice. After a little pretended demur on her part, it is agreed that they start on the Monday; meanwhile she takes the opportunity of mentioning the Etonian's wants.

The rector, as in duty bound, forthwith "forks out," and having gained his point, walks off to smoke his cigar and pay his after-breakfast visit to the stable. And let us ask, Why is his reverence in such a desperate hurry to go up to town? Is the Academy closed the first week in June? Perhaps Holman Hunt's

picture will be exhibited for the last time on Tuesday next, the 4th of June. But stay! Is not the Derby run on Wednesday, the 5th! Ha, ha! We have his reverence. On inquiry from one of his intimate friends, we gather that the rector has not been known to miss the great race for we are afraid to say how many years. There is a certain look, too, about the way in which his clothes are made, and the natty manner his white neckcloth, secured by a smart pearl pin, is tied, that somehow or other makes one immediately connect him with sport. And his looks don't belie him, for there is no better shot or thrower of a fly for miles round; and getting on in years though he be, and not so light either, he can still keep his place in the front rank in a good thing across country.

There is a story told of him, that once, when on a visit to a friend in a distant county, he was lucky enough to come in for *the* run of the season with the hounds

in those parts. There is *always* one "finest run that ever was seen" with every pack of hounds in the course of each year. The rector, being capitally mounted, as usual rode like a man, and probably, as he was not near his own parish, he put a little extra steam on for the occasion. However, this it is. Lord ——, the master, jogging along the road homewards, surrounded by five or six men, all expatiating on the merits of the run, and more than one of them laying claim to being best man on the occasion; after listening in silence for some time, his lordship pulled them up short by saying very quietly, "Well, gentlemen, you may say what you like; but that *customer in black* there" (customer, we regret to say, was *not* the word)—pointing to our friend the rector, who was a little ahead of them, as he spoke, with his hunting-whip—"beats all our heads off." After that not a word more was said on the subject, for it was agreed by nearly all

but the jealous ones, that the sporting rector had out and out the best of it from end to end; Jack Spigot, my lord's huntsman, going so far as to tell his master "that yon was just about the best passon as iver he see."

Let us observe that, notwithstanding his sporting propensities, he is quite as good in his parish as he is in the hunting-field. A thorough country gentleman, he understands to a nicety the manners and customs of his flock, and how to treat them, consequently they all pull together. No man either in the diocese is more popular with his bishop, who, knowing his sterling merits, winks at his subordinate's brown tops and feats in the pigskin.

Go into the paddock on the Derby day, and there, I will venture to say, you will see the reverend smarter than ever, inspecting each favourite with a critical eye; and take my word for it, if you were to

invest your fiver on the horse he fancies, you would not be very far off the winner of the Derby.

POST SCRIPTUM.

"Preservative Club,
"Wednesday Night, 5th June.

"I have just got back from the Derby, true to my word. I had not been in the paddock a quarter of an hour before I ran across my old friend the rector. 'And do you know,' said he, after we had a long discussion concerning all the horses, '*do you know*, I *really* think 'Sir Joseph' will win. I *do indeed*.'"

"THE REVEREND" (A SKETCH IN THE PADDOCK)

III.

"JANNETTE."

WHAT can have happened to turn topsy-turvy the hitherto comfortable little establishment of Mr. Sam Slowleaf, family grocer and Italian warehouseman, High Street, Slumborough?

Here, again, we will look in at breakfast time. Pretty little Mrs. Slowleaf (Slow has only been married three months) is sipping her tea in solemn silence; her eyelids are extremely red, as if she had been in tears, and she won't speak to her husband, who, naturally enough, wants to know the reason why. However, her sudden and unaccountable fit of temper does not spoil his appetite, and having made a substantial breakfast, he rises to go to his duties in the shop. This is the signal for a burst of tears on the part of Mrs. S.

"Why, what on earth is the matter now?" says Sam, considerably astonished. "Fanny, what is it? Tell me, my dear." And he proceeds to put his arm round her waist by way of comfort, but he is received with—

"Oh, you brute! You ought to be *ashamed* of yourself! I wonder you can dare to look me in the face." (Sob, sob, sob.) "Jannette, indeed!" (Sob and a hiccup.) "I only wish I could come across her, the nasty creature! Oh, you *wretch!* I'll go home to mother this very day. I wish——" Then comes a perfect avalanche of tears, as the lady throws herself exhausted in an easy-chair.

The cause of all this excitement is as follows:—

Mrs. Slowleaf waking up in the middle of the previous night, was considerably astonished to hear her lord and master more than once muttering the name of "Jannette" in his sleep. "Who can it be?" she thought. "Sam was rather sweet on Mary Brown

before he knew me; but she's married, so it can't be her. But I'll find it out if I die for it." So saying, she sat up in bed and waited for more. She had not long to wait.

"'Jannette's' the one for my money!" she hears him say, with a flourish of his arm that nearly catches her on her nose. "*She can stay for a week*, and she's as *fast* as you please."

"Oh, you low fellow!" mutters the poor little woman, shaking her fist at the unconscious monster.

"'Jannette' *walks* in."

"Not while *I'm* here," thinks the indignant wife, grinding her teeth with anger. She then gets up, dresses, has a good cry, writes a very long letter to her fond mother, has another cry, and sits herself down to wait until breakfast time to have it out with Sam.

Of her delight when she learns the real

history of "Jannette"—how that she is no designing damsel, but simply the favourite for the Oaks—we will not dwell upon. The finale of the whole business is, that after an unheard-of number of kisses had passed between the two—considerably more than were absolutely necessary—and a little more crying on the part of Mrs. Slowleaf, Sam told his pretty wife to immediately order herself a brand-new bonnet and dress, and that he would take her up to London and see the sights, and if she liked she should go to the Derby and the Oaks into the bargain—"and there," said wicked Sam, "you can scold 'Jannette' to your heart's content."

"Oh, you dear, kind, good-for-nothing Sam!" exclaimed his delighted wife, making a rush at him.

We regret to say there was more kissing; and it was a good twelve o'clock before this gallant young grocer was once more at work amongst his "prunes" and "figs."

Indeed, in the course of the morning, divers old "tabbies" of the town were seen to shake their heads, and heard to express their firm conviction that "Sam Slowleaf was neglecting his business sadly."

Strolling on to the hill after the Derby is over, our hungry eyes looking in vain for the "light-hearted Lancer's" hospitable drag, we suddenly come across a waggonette, seated in which, revelling in pigeon-pie and lobster salad, are four people, who, judging by their laughter and noise, we should say are as happy a quartette as is to be found on the course. We have no difficulty in recognizing the bright face of pretty Mrs. Slowleaf peeping out of a particularly smart new bonnet. Next to her is another very smart young lady, who, by her likeness to Mrs. Sam, we take to be her sister; and very attentive to the sister is a good-looking young fellow, who is evidently very sweet in that quarter. Small blame to him, for she is uncommonly

pretty, is Mrs. Slowleaf's sister. Last but not least is Sam himself, got up regardless of expense—white hat, blue veil, and all complete (won't he go in for the knock-'em-downs by-and-by?). He greets me with much cordiality, for don't I get all my groceries from him? He proceeds to tell me with great glee about his wife and "Jannette," notwithstanding the blushes and remonstrances of Mrs. Sam.

"But I really must go and find this drag. So good-bye, Mrs. Slowleaf; good-bye, Sam. I shall look for you both on the Oaks day; and Mrs. Slowleaf, if you *do* run across 'Jannette,' show her no mercy!"

THE RUN OF THE SEASON, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Letter No. I.

A DAY WITH THE SCRAMBLETONSHIRE.

From Nimrod, Junior (Mr. James Jerramy), Bull Hotel, Scrambleton, to the Editor, "The Daily Gusher," Fleet Street, London.

"I THINK I announced, in my last contribution to this journal, that I should probably next select for inspection and criticism that celebrated pack of foxhounds, the 'Scrambletonshire.' I have kept my word, as I hope I invariably do, to your thousands—*millions* I may say—of readers; and you shall now hear a short account of a day with this well-known pack.

"A few nights ago on entering the coffee-room of the first-rate and very exclusive club to which I have the honour to belong, for the purpose of discussing my usual before-dinner glass of sherry and *peach* bitters (I mention this, as it will no doubt interest many of my readers to know that I never touch any other bitters *but* peach, and I strongly advise them to try it; it is very far superior to orange), I there ran across an old brother sportsman doing precisely the same thing. He is a man on whose opinion I can always rely; indeed as regards hunting, I cannot pay him a better compliment in saying that he knows nearly as much about the noble science—as Delmé Radcliffe calls it—as your humble servant himself. What more can I say?

"'You're going to see the Scrambleton-shire, are you, old pal?' said he in his jolly way. 'Then go down by the four o'clock express to Scrambleton—best train in the day—drive to the "Bull," mention

my name to the landlord, and you'll be in clover during your stay.' So saying, my friend swallowed his sherry and bitters at a gulp, and nodding farewell, walked out of the room.

"Last Monday, then, saw me ensconced comfortably in a first-class carriage of the train leaving St. Pancras at four o'clock. The evening struck me as feeling rather frosty, and I felt the sable collar and cuffs on my great-coat remarkably pleasant to my neck and wrists. Lighting a *regalia magnifico* (one of a box, the gift of my noble friend the Viscount Noodle, and which I should say must have cost his lordship at *least* ten guineas a pound), and taking from my silver-mounted travelling-bag the *Saturday Review*, I contrived to while away pleasantly enough the two hours' journey from London to Scrambleton.

"Punctual to a minute, the train brought me to my journey's end, and picking out a

fly drawn by a rare-shaped chestnut, with two white legs—evidently an old hunter, I should say—I drove to the "Bull." The landlord, Mr. John Smith, required no mention of my friend's name as an inducement for making me comfortable; for my reputation, it seems, had gone before me, and having heard I was shortly to arrive in those parts, and guessing I should use his house, he had not only kept his best room vacant for me, but had reserved his own hunter expressly for my use. I forthwith expressed a wish that he would give me his company at dinner that evening, an invitation which he gladly accepted.

"Of the dinner, I can only say the soup was of the clearest, the turbot the flakiest, the beefsteak the tenderest, and the hen pheasant the plumpest I ever sat down to; and of the Perrier-Jouet, all I can say to my readers is, go and try it. My host proved a perfect Murray's Handbook in himself, and

over our cigars and brandy-and-soda told me about everything and everybody in the country.

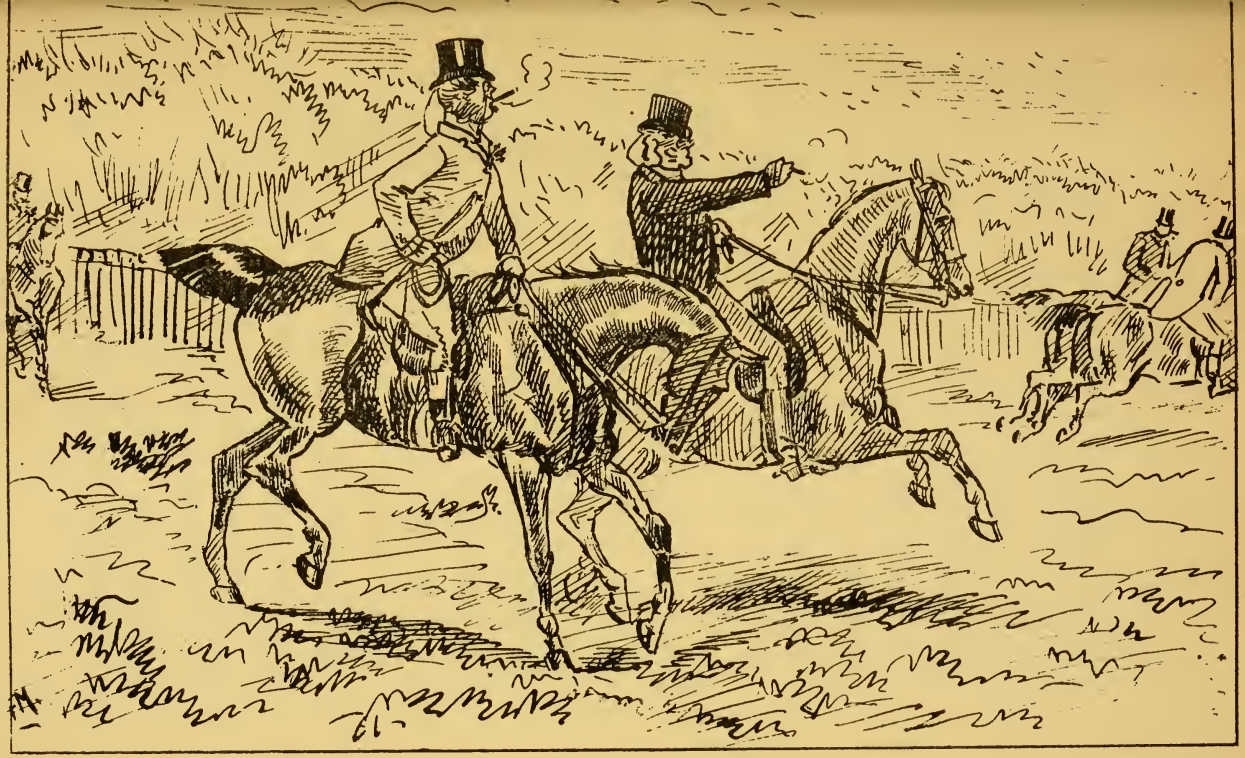
"'And where do the hounds meet to morrow?' I inquired, lighting a fresh cigar.

"'Ah! you're in luck, sir, to-morrow,' replied Mr. Smith, 'for they go to Hazelby Manor, the seat—the *princely* seat, I may say—of one of the most popular and affable gentlemen in the county—John Hazelby, Esq. There will be breakfast for all comers, a hearty welcome, and a sure find; and you'll most likely have a run over the very cream of our country. It's only three miles off; so, if you don't mind, I will ride with you and show you the way.

"Accepting gladly my host's kind offer, and bidding him good night, I finished my cigar and betook myself to my bedchamber forthwith, the better to insure my usual nerve and skill the next day."

"Tuesday morning broke beautifully fine—perhaps, if anything, a trifle too bright; and nine o'clock saw me down in the coffee-room, feeling remarkably fresh and well, a sure sign of the Perrier-Jouet of the previous night having been good. A slight breakfast—just an egg and a cup of coffee—did me; and at a quarter to ten my genial host appeared, and with a 'Now, sir, if you're ready, we'll have a start,' we sallied forth to the hall door, in front of which two remarkably good-looking horses were being led up and down, and, to my great delight, the handsomest one of the pair—a brown, with a white star on its forehead—I found, was my mount for the day.

"Mr. Smith and myself then mounting without loss of time, away we jogged to the meet. Five-and-thirty minutes brought us, in company with sundry other scarlet and black coats, to the lodge gates of Hazelby, and passing through a splendid avenue of



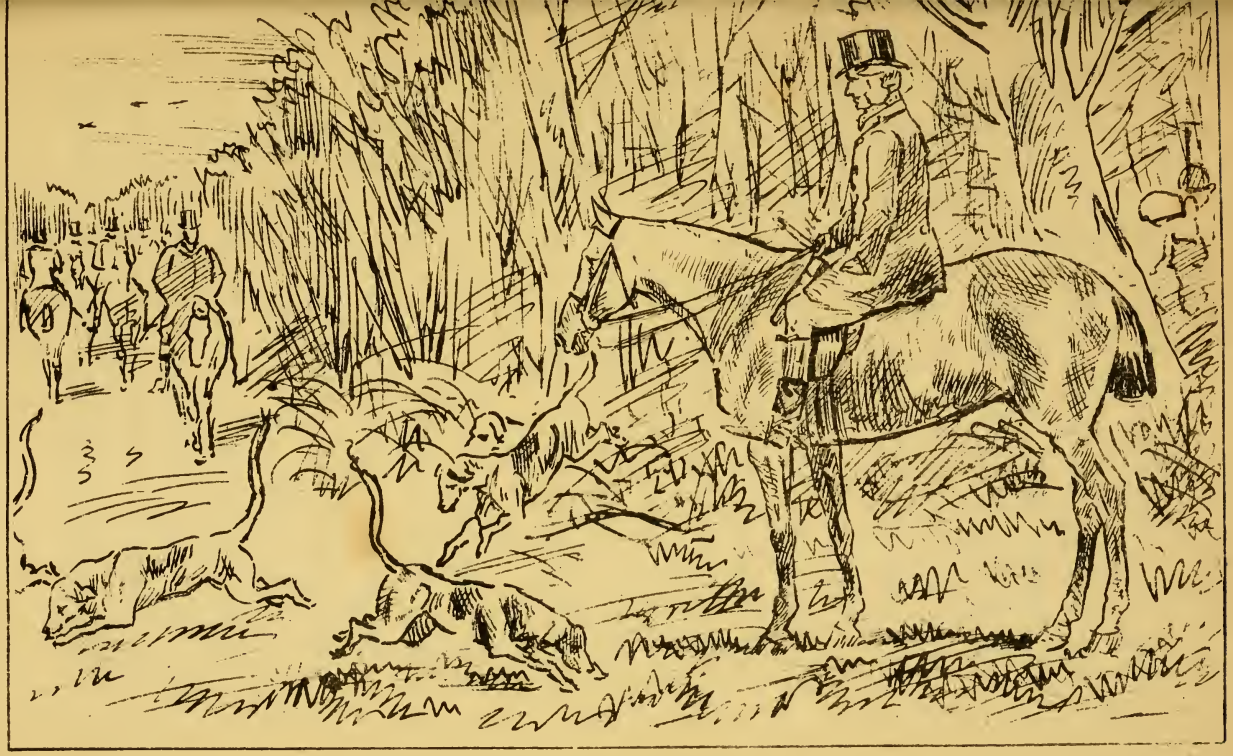
NIMROD JUNR & MR SMITH GOING TO THE MEET.

some length, we arrived in front of the house, which I may here remark is a fine structure, built by the celebrated Inigo Jones. The hounds had already arrived, and were enjoying a roll on the grass, the huntsmen and whips indulging in a glass of something to keep the cold out, which the master of Hazelby had considerately sent out to them by one of his menials.

"Giving my horse to Mr. Smith's man, who had been sent on beforehand, I made my way to the house, at the porch of which stood as fine a specimen of the old English gentleman as anyone would wish to see. I had no difficulty in at once making him out to be Mr. Hazelby himself. He immediately, seeing I was a stranger, invited me in in the kindest manner, and ushered me into the dining-room himself. Having seen me seated, he excused himself for leaving, as he said, to see about other strangers, who might be too shy to come in without being asked.

"A splendid repast was indeed provided for us, to which I did ample justice. A sprightly youth sat next to me, whom I speedily discovered was Master Thomas Hazelby, the eldest son of our generous host, being educated at Eton, as he informed me, and now enjoying his vacation. He gave me the soundest advice, young as he was, as regards what to eat and drink; and, when I had quite done, went the length of fetching with his own hands, from the sideboard, a bottle of dry curaçoa—stuff, he quaintly observed, which would make my hair curl. Delightful, high-spirited youth! what a treasure he must be to his worthy father!

"I must not take leave of the *déjeûner* without a word for the room. The oak parlour, as it is called, is indeed a splendid apartment. Hazelbys, from the hands of Vandyke, Sir Peter Lely, and other great painters, looked down on us from the panels round the room; grim old Admiral Hazelby,



"THE MASTER"

who so distinguished himself against the Spanish Armada, scowled at everybody from above the grand old carved chimney-piece; whilst small pictures, too numerous to mention, by Cuyp, Vandervelde, Teniers, and others, caught the eye at every point. I quite regretted leaving the grand old room, made extra picturesque by the numerous red coats it was filled with. However, I tore myself away at last, and with Mr. Smith at my elbow, wended my way outside, to view, under his able guidance, the great guns of the hunt.

"To begin with the gallant master, Captain Hardman; who does not know him? Who turns out a better team, or drives them better at the meets of the Four-in-hand Club, than he does, I should like to know? And does he not look, as he is, a model of a master of hounds, as, faultlessly got up, he throws morsels of biscuit, produced from his coat pocket, to his favourites of the pack? He in

the most courteous manner pointed out to me the celebrities amongst his hounds, which I suppose, take them as a whole, are as perfect a lot as ever were got together. Where too, I ask, can you match his huntsman, Tom Larrup? I am sure I could not tell you. Talking to the worthy master, I discern Lord Buttercup and his two sons, the Honbles. Hugh and Adolphus Cowslip. His lordship, I am informed, is a staunch supporter of the hunt, and always has a fox ready for them when they meet at Cowslip Castle. Then there is the charming Lady Blanche Blaze-away, and her husband, Mr. Blazeaway, both hard riders; Lady Blanche mounted on a splendid bay hunter. With her is another equally charming young lady, whom I find on inquiry is Miss Lucy Hazelby, the eldest daughter of the squire. She, too, is magnificently mounted. Captain Welter, the well-known steeplechase rider, is here too, and with him on a visit is Mr. Teddy Bobson,

also well known on the flagged course. Messrs. Crasher, Smasher, Swellcove, Tetterby, Brag, Crane, Batterboy, Rasper, Bludyer, Foozle—all are pointed out to me as good men and true; and many others, too numerous to mention.

"And now the order is given to make a move. So we trot across the park, to draw the belts round it. My horse, being disagreeably fresh, proceeded to kick; however, my superior seat in the saddle soon told him it was mere waste of time trying to get rid of me.

"Our first venture being no go, we trot on to a favourite wood of the squire's, called the Dean, where the head keeper (a most superior kind of man) informs us that we are sure to find; and scarcely are the words out of his mouth before Reynard is away, in view of the whole field.

"Tom Larrup has his hounds on to him in a trice. A big fence seems to stop half the

field. Lady Blazeaway, Miss Hazelby, and a hard-riding young cavalry officer, Mr. Chester, of the 109th Lancers, charge it in line. My horse, breaking away, jumps it so big that he nearly unships even me. I look round. Three scarlet coats are down, kicking about on their backs on the greensward like three lively turtles; three horses galloping away riderless. A shrill voice holloas out just behind me, 'Forrard! forrard! forrard!' It is the hope of the house of Hazelby, Master Tom, sending his pony along as hard as ever he can go. A true chip of the old block that. The two ladies, the gallant master, Mr. Chester, Messrs. Crasher, Smasher, and Welter, are taking everything in their line. I need scarcely tell my readers Nimrod, junior, is doing the same. The pace is simply awful, only nine or ten people near the hounds.

"We cross a ploughed field. I hear a cry behind me. It is Master Tom Hazelby

"THE HOPE OF THE FAMILY"

again—in trouble this time, his pony quite beat and declining to move. Perhaps he will die. Ought I to leave him in distress the eldest son of my genial entertainer of the morning? I think not. With longing eyes I look at the diminishing figures of the hard riders of the hunt, and as they disappear over a fence on the brow of a distant hill, I slowly turn round my horse, as reluctant as myself, to do the good Samaritan to my young friend, Master Tom. That young gentleman is inclined to shed tears, as he thinks his pony is going to die; but a little attention, rubbing his ears, etc., soon brings him round, and we both get into the high-road together. Master Thomas then puts me on the right way back to Scrambleton, whilst he goes down another round towards Hazelby.

"I reach my quarters at the "Bull" after an hour and a half's ride; and in about half an hour after my host, Mr. Smith, arrives,

with a dirty coat, and his horse lame. They have had a wonderful run, he tells me—an hour and twenty minutes, with scarcely a check, winding up with a kill in the open. The gallant and popular master, I regretted to hear, was not there to see the finish, having received a very bad fall early in the run, from which I trust he will soon recover. Miss Hazelby got the brush, which I hear she fairly won by her gallant horsemanship. I only regret that I was prevented seeing more of the run ; still, what I did see of it enables me to inform my readers, without the least flattery, that Scrambletonshire boasts as fine a pack of hounds, as good a master, and as fine a lot of riders as it has ever been my luck to witness.

"Just as I was sitting down to dinner, a note was placed in my hands, which proved on opening to be from Squire Hazelby, thanking me for my kindness to his son, and hoping I would come over and dine and sleep

the next night; not only that, but kindly offering to mount me the following day, and have another turn with the Scrambletonshire hounds. Need I say I accepted his hospitable offer with the utmost alacrity.

"Next week my readers may look out for another and fuller account of the Scrambletonshire and their doings from the pen of their faithful servant,

"NIMROD, JUNIOR."

Letter No. II.

From John Hazelby, Hazelby Manor, Scrambleton, to Major General Tallboys, Army and Navy Club, St. James's Square, London.

"My dear Geoffrey,

"My letters to you are, as a rule, of the very stupidest description, as you know, generally, I think, merely asking how you are, where you are, and when you are coming down to see us. This time, though, I fancy I shall prove a little more interesting than usual, for I really have a bit of news for you that will both astonish and please you—at least I trust so.

"I must begin at the very beginning, so here goes. You must know, then, that the hounds met here yesterday for the second time this year. I picked out this week for asking them to come, as the house was full of people, including Tom home from Eton; and

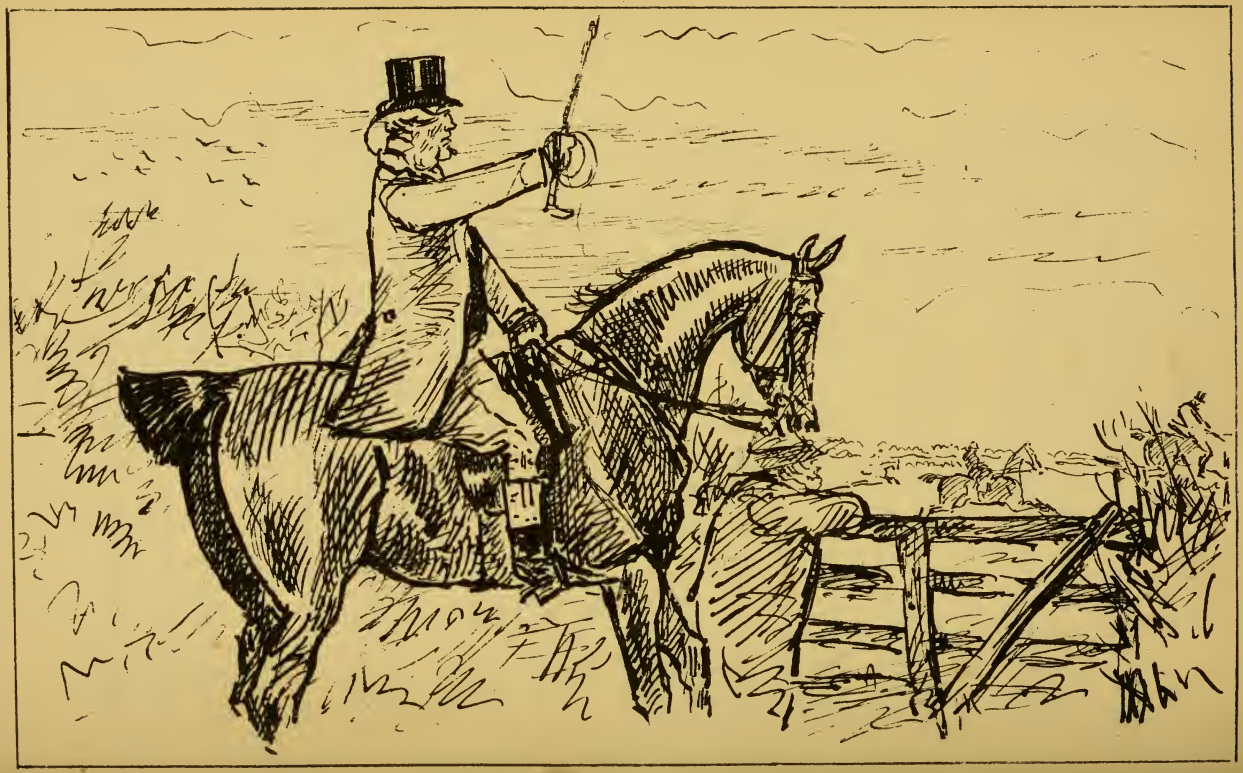
the hunt ball at Scrambleton coming off to-morrow night made everything fit in very nicely, and provided lots of fun for my guests.

"We gave everybody to eat and drink—not that I like these hunt breakfasts as a rule, with unlimited champagne and curaçoa, and all sorts of liquors flowing like water. However, that wilful daughter of mine, and god-daughter of yours—to wit, Miss Lucy—would have it so; so the thing was done, and it always is, I find, if she so disposes. Of that young lady more anon.

"Well, there was a big field, as there always is so soon after Christmas; and everybody having eaten and drunk to their satisfaction, away we all started—old Ralph Topper, of Barley Hill Farm, riding up alongside of me, and saying, much to my amusement, 'Well, squire, I don't know how *you* feel, but *I* feel as if I could ride over any mortal thing—I do.' I am told he was

quite as good as his word, and old as he is, and very heavy, went out of his way to jump three brand-new gates in the course of the day.

"Well, we drew the places all round the park, but to no purpose, and then we trotted off to the Dean. (You remember the wood called the Dean, where, when you were shooting here last year, we had a sweep for the woodcocks? Three were killed, and you killed them all, you dog, you! and pocketed all our money in consequence.) I give you my word, the hounds had not been in the cover two minutes before away went a fox before the whole field. I never ride now, as you know; so away I went down the road as hard as I could split, followed by about three parts of the field, as far as I could see. After about two miles I branched off to the left, through Joe Appleby's (my tenant) rick-yard, through the orchard at the back of the house, through the gate at the further end,



"MISS LUCY RIDES A TRIFLE TOO STRAIGHT."

and here I saw the whole thing most beautifully. There were two hounds running like smoke, as the saying is, and only about ten people near them ; and close to them, though he had had a fall already, as I could easily see, was Tom Larrup, the huntsman. And, by Jove! who do you think were pretty close behind him? Why, none other but my daughter Lucy, and that scamp young Will Chester, who is staying with me! I had told off Headstall, the coachman, to stick to Miss Lucy all day, and this was the result.

"Now they come to a double post and rails. Tom Larrup pulls his horse up, and goes in and out. 'Surely,' I think, 'that young ruffian will never let Lucy go at the rails?' I am very much mistaken, it seems, for I see him ride at them fifty miles an hour, and coolly turn round in his saddle on landing, looking how Lucy will do them. 'Stop, Lucy, stop!—I implore you!' I shouted frantically. She never heard me, or if she did took no notice,

for the next moment she was in the air, and the next sailing away, hands down, the other side. I waited for no more. As Lucy disappeared over the next fence, I turned tail and betook myself to the road once more, and never saw the hounds again all day.

"I won't bore you with the distance they went, where they ran to, who rode well, or who funked; it suffices to say that after one of the best runs folks ever remember in this county, the hounds killed their fox handsomely in the open. Only five souls were up at the finish besides the huntsman and first whip. Two out of the five were Miss Lucy and Master William Chester, and it is admitted on all sides that that pretty pair had far and away the best of it. Lucy was duly presented with the brush, as you may imagine, by the admiring Tom Larrup; Hardman, the master, I regret to say, not being there, having had a bad fall. I must give that worthy an extra fiver at

the end of the season, I think, to celebrate the event.

"I, as I told you, never saw the hounds again after turning back into the road. So I turned my horse's head and rode slowly home, and mooned about the home farm all the rest of the day.

"Now comes a nice story. About four o'clock, having retired to my sanctum for a quiet cigar, I was sitting in my cozy arm-chair, half asleep half awake, when the door opens suddenly, and in comes Mistress Lucy, waving the fox's brush in triumph over her head. Well, you know, Geoffrey, of course I tried to blow her up—so unwomanly, etc., etc. But it wouldn't do; I was forced to turn round and say I was immensely pleased with the whole performance. So I was, really; but I remembered how her poor mother detested ladies riding to hounds.

"Well, after I had heard all about the run, Lucy suddenly rang the bell, saying, 'I am

going to have a cup of tea in here to-night with my own dear old Daddy—aren't I, Dads?' ('This is something new,' I thought. However, I kept that to myself.) 'Robert,' said she, when the footman appeared, 'bring the tea in here, please, and—and bring in *three* cups. Perhaps some one else might come in.'

"I saw Robert stare when he left the room.

"'My dear child, *why* three cups?' I began. 'I don't want any of the other people invading my room.'

"'Oh, I don't suppose they'll come in, Daddy dear. I only ordered enough cups in *case* they might.'

"'Oh, I *see*. *Oh*, *yes*,' I replied, though I could not understand all the same.

"The tea came in, and Miss Lucy, sitting on my knee, poured it out.

"'Daddy,' said she, after a pause, 'don't you think Will—I mean Mr. Chester—nice?'

"'Yes, Loo,' I said, 'I think he is a nice young fellow enough. Why, do you think he's nice?'

"'Yes,' replied Miss Lucy, looking down into her tea cup, 'I think he's a nice young fellow enough.'

"The sly puss! repeating my very words. 'What's in the wind now?' I thought. Then came a pause—a long one—nothing heard but the clinking of Lucy's spoon against her cup.

"'Daddles,' she began again.

"'Well, love?' I replied.

"'You heard me say Mr. Chester got the best of it considerably to-day, didn't you, Daddles?'

"'Did you? Oh, I had forgotten that,' I rejoined. Poor little girl! I knew now what was coming, Geoffrey, and thought I would get a rise out of her, though it was rather cruel, I admit.

"Another pause, during which Miss Lucy

fidgets very much on my knee, and stirs the tea in her cup in the most unnecessary manner.

"'Daddles,' said she all of a sudden, 'what do you think I heard that tipsy old Ralph Topper say to another farmer?—meaning *us*, Dad; Will—I mean Mr. Chester—and I. Well, he said, "Those two seem made——" He meant us, Daddles—*us*, Mr. Chester and I; you must recollect that, you know. "Those two seem made for one another." We *both* heard it, Daddles; that was the best of it. Wasn't it funny of him?' She had her face close to mine, and I could feel something very like a tear trickling down her cheek.

"'And what did you and Chester think?' I inquired gently.

"'We—we—we—bo-o-o-th agreed with him, Daddles. And he's asked me to be his wife, and I said yes, Daddy; and—and I told him I would ask—you—and—you *will* let us, won't you, Daddles darling? And—

and—and—that's who the third cup is for, Daddles. And—and—I think he's outside.'

"And with that she jumped up, Geoffrey, opened the door, and there, sure enough, in the passage sat Master William Chester, with his head hanging over his shoulder, fast asleep. He pretty quick woke up, I can tell you. His mistress then dragged him in, looking rather sheepish, and the three of us sat down to tea together.

"To say I was astonished isn't the word—beats cock-fighting, don't it? Joking apart, I am really pleased, for, besides being a very nice fellow, he is well off, and will be much better off some day. Of course, the affair was known all over the house before dinner time. I shall miss dear Lucy dreadfully, but still one must expect that sort of thing. As I write this, over my after-breakfast cigar, I see from my sanctum window the pair of lovers just going for a stroll. Beauty is just lighting her Beast's pipe for him with a fusee; and,

by Jove! he's giving her a kiss. Write by return, old friend, and say what you think of the whole proceedings; and I hope you will say that you will be here the same day as your letter. Lucy bids me tell you that if you don't come down at once she will never forgive you.

"Always yours,

"JOHN HAZELBY."

Letter No. III.

From Miss Hazelby, Hazelby Manor, Scrambleton, to Mrs. Charles Sinclair, Curzon Street, Mayfair, London.

"My dearest Violet,

"Do you remember, dear, the day you were married, just four months ago, telling me, the last thing before you started off for the honeymoon, that you'd bet me a dozen pairs of gloves I should be married before another year was out? You've won your bet, my dear, for though I am not actually married, I am engaged to be. The same thing, isn't it, Violet? His name's Will Chester, and he's in the 109th Lancers. He's called 'Bill' in the regiment, but *I* call him Will, and William when I want to be *very* cold and he wants *snubbing*. I'm not a gushing damsel, as you know, Vi. dear, but he's *so* nice; in fact, *quite the nicest*. I am *sure* you'll say so when you see him.

"The hounds met here yesterday. We found at the Dean; had what my Will calls a nailing good run; he and I cut 'em all down. I got the brush, and Will asked me to be his wife before we got home. Knocked all of a heap he said he was by my horsemanship. I accepted him with much pleasure, I assure you, though of course I did not tell *him* so. When we got home, I went straight to papa's 'den,' and told him *all*. Then Will came in, and we all three sat down to tea together.

"You've never seen my young man, so I'll describe him. He's tall—six foot two in his boots—dark, with a slight moustache; *very* good looking (at least, *I* think so); dresses remarkably well, not affecting in the least the *horsey* attire one so often sees amongst men in the cavalry, and which I *detest;* and you should see him ride, Vi. He *can* go, I can tell you. He says he's very domestic; however, we shall see about that. Don't you think, Vi. dear, he *sounds* nice? I assure

you he is the—— Oh, no, I won't; I can't express my feelings properly. I don't quite know whether to keep him in the army or not. What do you think, dear? I am inclined to think *not.* I think I should like to live in the country, so that I could have him all to my own self, just running up to town for a couple of months in the season, so as to let Will see his soldier friends, and take *me* to Ascot and the opera occasionally. Don't you think that a good arrangement for both parties? Write immediately, my dear, and tell me what you think of it all, and give me the benefit of your *experience.*

"How is your lord and master? Have you got him well in hand still? We are going to have some theatricals here soon. 'Uncle's Will' is to be one of the pieces. Will and I are to be husband and wife in it. They have a quarrel in it, and then make it up. We begin rehearsing to-morrow, so we

shall be quarrelling and making friends again every day for the next fortnight. Will says the making up, he thinks, will be very nice. Will you and your good man come down here for the said theatricals? Do, there's a dear. It was very unkind of you both not to come for Christmas as I asked you. You *must* come now. Tell that husband of yours I *insist* upon it. Good-bye now, my dearest Vi., and believe me, with fondest love,

"Ever yours affectionately,

"LUCY.

"P.S.—Lucy Chester won't *sound* bad, will it? I have written Lucy Hazelby and Lucy Chester side by side ever so many times, and think Lucy Chester sounds and looks *ever so much* the best."

Letter No. IV.

From William Chester, 109th Lancers, Hazelby Manor, Scrambleton, to the Honourable George Sabretache, St. James's Street, London.

"My dear George,

"How are you and your broken leg getting on, old chap? We had a deuced good run yesterday, and your brown horse carried me like a bird; so well, indeed, that if you'll take three hundred for him, say so and book him to me. That's not all I've got to tell you, my bould sojer boy. What do you say to my being engaged to be married to your old flame (you *were* hit rather hard under the wing; you know you were, you old beggar), Lucy Hazelby? If you had seen her ride as I did yesterday, you'd have gone off your head. I was done for completely, and was obliged to let her know the state of my heart as we rode home together. I kept humming and hawing, and talking all manner

of bosh, till we got within a mile of home; then I out with it at last, and proposed and was accepted.

"By Jove! you should have seen her when her horse was rather cooked, and we came to a fence you simply couldn't see through. I holloaed out, 'I don't like the fence, Miss Hazelby. Do you think your horse would do the gate after me?' 'He'll *have* to,' said she in an instant. Your brown horse never touched it, and before I could say knife, she was after me, her mare hitting it hard. I could have hugged her on the spot. I was a gone coon from that moment, George. Two fields further on, thank Heaven, we killed our fox, and Lucy, of course, got the brush.

"I had it out with the governor that very evening before dinner. He was quite agreeable—what a fine old boy he is!—so it's all settled, and there's nothing to do now but to fix the day. Everybody seems

pleased, which is agreeable to my feelings; Tom Hazelby, Lucy's young brother at Eton, being especially so. The young sinner drank quite as much champagne as was good for him, drinking our healths and his own at dinner last night, and getting me into a corner, had the cheek to offer to ride my horses any day, in case Lucy and I did not want to hunt. I think I see the young blackguard bucketing them without mercy all over the place. Get your damaged leg right as soon as you can, old man, for I shall try and bring the event off in as short a time as possible, and you'll have to be best man.

"I can't write any more, for I hear distant music from the piano in the drawing-room, and I must there at once, for I can guess who is the performer. So good-bye, old fellow. Write by return, and congratulate the happiest man in England—to wit,

"Yours truly,

"William Chester."

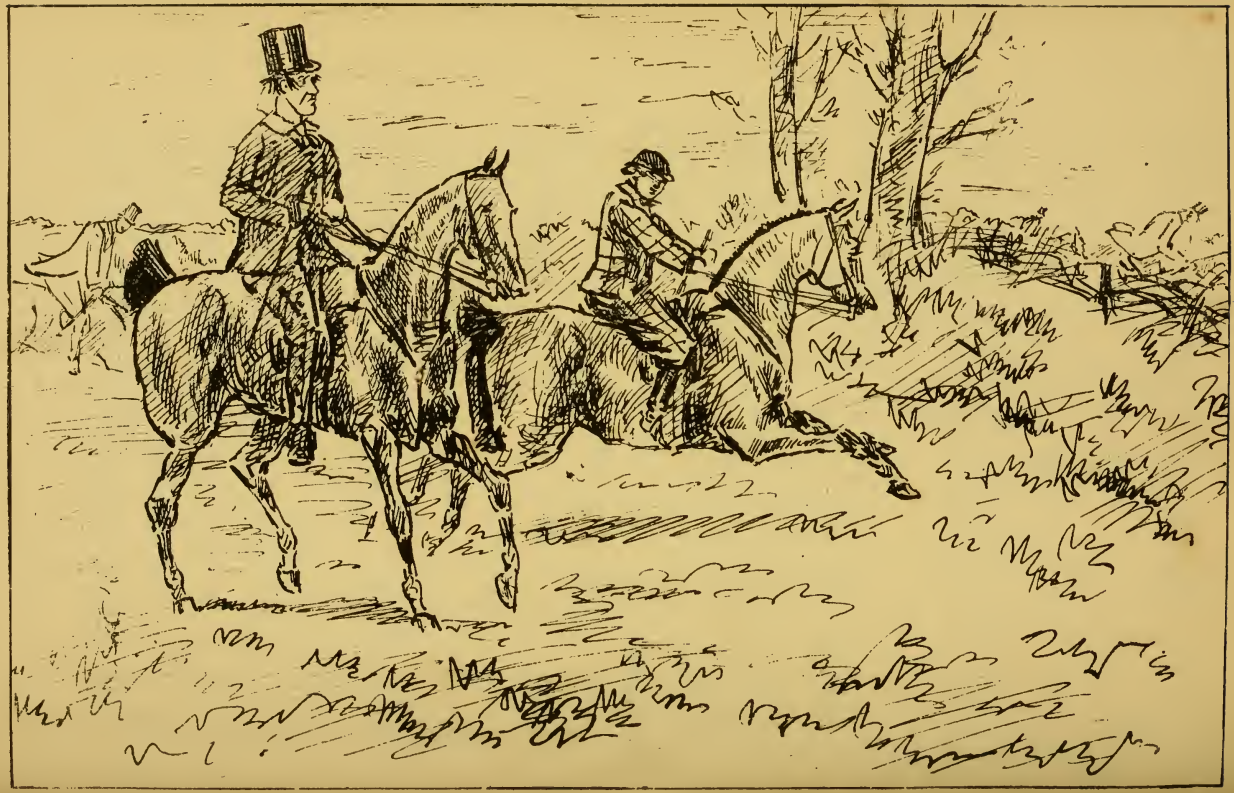
Letter No. V.

From Tom Hazelby, Hazelby Manor and Eton College, Bucks, to Reginald Delamere, Benderby Hall, Oxon, also of Eton College, Bucks.

"Dear Minor,

"The guv. has just told me that he'll be delighted if you'll come and spend the rest of the holidays here, so pack up your traps, my boy, and come at once. Larks of all description are going on; hunting and shooting all day, theatricals or dances somewhere every night. You need'nt bring your horse with you; the guv. will mount you.

"We had the best fun yesterday I ever had in my life. The hounds, as you may have read in the *Field*, met here. The ancient gave a regular breakfast—champagne going like water, sir; cigars handed round to every one before they went away; in short everything tip-top. Robert, the footman (you remember the cheeky beggar, don't



"CAD BROWN IN DIFFICULTIES"

you?), brought the weeds round to me, and said, 'I suppose you won't 'ave one, will you, Master Tom?' Didn't I, though? The governor had started, so I told him to go to the devil, and collared a couple of 'em. Capital weeds they were too; but the guv. likes his a trifle fuller flavoured than those you and I get at Kitty Frayer's, and before the day was out I found they did not suit my constitution quite so well as those of hers. Nothing like getting used to one brand, and sticking to it, I find.

"Well, away we went. My hunter was as fresh as paint, and went bucking and kicking all over the place directly he got on the grass. We found almost directly at a wood of ours, called the Dean, and off we started as hard as we could split. Cad Brown was out, and funked the very first fence. I wish you had seen him. I'll tell all the fellows in his dame's when I get back. My pony jumped it as easily as possible. Well, the end of it

was that, owing to the awful pace, and not being quite up to my weight, my pony stopped short in the middle of a ploughed field. I really thought he was going to die. I longed for a second horse, but it was no use wishing, so I had to go home. You should have seen my sister ride; she got the brush when they killed, which they did in the open, after a tremendous run. You'll see it in the *Field* next week, if you look.

"That very evening, Will Chester, of the 109th Lancers, who is staying here, and who beat every one in the run, popped the question to my sister, and they are engaged. Such a jolly chap! He's going to mount me to-morrow on his chestnut mare, 'Kate Kearney.' The guv. remonstrated; but, as he says, 'a baby in arms could ride her.' He also told the old 'un I was a workman. That's a compliment from a man like that, ain't it? He and I and Loo are going to

have a rat-hunt in the barn this afternoon. We're not going to tell the other people in the house. Of course, I twig it all, and shall shut my eyes to all that goes on. A precious bit of rat-hunting Lucy and he'll do, I guess. The gong's just gone for lunch, so bye-bye, old chap. Write and say which day you'll come.

"Yours ever,

"T. HAZELBY.

"P.S. How's that old sap, your major? Hope I shan't be his fag next half."

Letter No. VI.

From Joseph Binns, butler, Hazelby Manor, to Morgan Price, butler, 150, *Eaton Square, London, S.W.*

"Dear Taffy,

"I hope this finds you none the worse for Christmas festivities, wich it finds me all right bar a suspishon of gout, wich is only natchural. I have a commission I wish you would egsecute for me when convenient. I must tell you our eldest dauter has just made a match of it, with a young kavalry officer who is staying with us. It was only give out last night, but I've seen it coming on some time. She is a sweet amyable girl, and me and the other domestics wish to mark our approval of the match by making her a slight present. I think a silver tea-pot, cream-jug, and sugar-basen would be about the ticket, so I shall be obligated to you if you would kindly look out for a set of the same, to soot the occasion Let me know the

figger, and I will send you cash by return. I need scarcely say that, under the sircumstances, money is *no* object. I should like the pattern of the articles to be strickly anteek, for, as you are awair, nothing modern goes down nowerdays. Me and the family shan't be in town until just before the Darby, I expect; but when I do come up, you may expect an early call from yours truly. And if you and your guverner haven't finished all that curious old brown sherry of his I admired so much the last time I was at your place, I shall be glad to crack a quiet bottle with you some day, and talk over old times. Hoping my commission won't put you much out of the way,

"I remane,

"Toot ar voo (as the French say),

"JOSEPH BINNS.

"*To Mr. Morgan Price.*"

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